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THE COMMUNAL PACT OF NATIONAL IDENTITIES: THE MAKING AND POLITICS OF THE 1943 NATIONAL PACT *

Farid el-Khazen†

Since the outbreak of war in 1975, Lebanon has been the subject of a plethora of writing reflecting the divisive issues that have marked conflict. This contrasts with the dearth of writing on the period that immediately preceded the war, namely, the late 1960s and early 1970s, which would have helped explain the process of disintegration that opened the country to almost all the destabilising forces that have swept the Middle East in the last three or four decades.

The same can be said about another period, namely pre-independence Lebanon under the French mandate, beginning in the early 1920s with the establishment of the modern Lebanese state. Aside from the proclamation of the Constitution in 1926, the most important development that occurred in the next two decades was Lebanon's independence, achieved by the mid-1940s. The National Pact of 1943 (*al-Mithaq al-Watani*) was the new label that came to symbolise post-independence confessional politics, thereby crowning the process of change that occurred during the mandate both within Lebanon and in its regional order.

The process of change within Lebanon under the mandate was

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two-dimensional. It hinged on the need to close the gap between Christians and Muslims (more accurately, between the Maronite and Sunni readings of post-1920 Greater Lebanon), and on the need to end mandatory rule and seek independence. This dialectic between internal and external politics—confessional balancing and the objective of ending colonial rule—had marked much of Lebanon's political life until the mid-1940s. The verbal understanding that was reached in 1943, which came to be known as the National Pact, embodied Lebanon's 'dichotomous' unity: internal unity within Lebanon, and Lebanese unity *vis-à-vis* the outside world, mainly Syria (then the major actor in Lebanon's regional order), and France (then the major colonial power in Syria and Lebanon).

A number of studies have dealt with the National Pact. But studies on the Pact have attempted to advance a particular reading of that unwritten 'document'. Interpretations of the National Pact varied with the ebb and flow of Lebanese politics. Deplored in times of crisis and praised in times of stability and prosperity, the National Pact reflected sectarian differences in post-1943 Lebanon. For some, the National Pact came to symbolise national integration and confessional unity[1]; for others it came to embody a 'philosophy' of confessional coexistence[2]; still for others, it was a 'capitalist confessional' deal aimed at promoting the interests of some segments of Lebanese society at the expense of others.[3]

[1] See, for example, Basim al-Jisr, *Mithaq 1943, Limaza Kan Wa limaza Saqat* (Beirut: Dar al-Nahar Lilnashr, 1978).

[2] See, for example, Kamal Yusuf al-Hajj, *Al-Ta'ifiya al-Banna'a Aw Falsafat al-Mithaq al-Watani* (Beirut: Matba'at al-Rahbaniya al-Lubnaniya, 1961). Al-Hajj attempted to give the National Pact a 'philosophical' interpretation in his writings on Christian-Muslim co-existence. He even coined a new term to denote confessional harmony in Lebanese society: 'al-Naslamiya'. He was assassinated in 1976 in his village home, in the Aley district, an area controlled by leftist and Palestinian forces. For a scathing critique of al-Hajj's ideas, see Nassif Nassar, *Nahwa Mujtama' Jadid, Muqadamat Assassiya fi naqd al-Mujtama' al-Ta'ifi* (Beirut: Dar al-Talia', 1981), pp. 53–73.

[3] See, for example, Mass'ud Daher, *Lubnan, al-Istiqlal, al-Sigha wal Mithaq* (Beirut: Dar al-Matbu'at al-Sharqiya, 1984). Daher argues that the National Pact reflects an overlap between confessional and economic (class) interests. Such an interpretation also means a dissociation from 'true Arabism' and creates a situation of total economic dependency on the imperialist West. This reasoning reflects the predominant leftist reading of the National Pact on the eve of the 1975–76 war.

The National Pact, however, was none of these rather exclusive interpretations. It was essentially an arrangement that emerged at an opportune time and was facilitated by the concurrent occurrence of developments both within Lebanon and in the region. This paper will explore the unfolding events that led to the making of the 1943 National Pact and will focus on the changing interpretations and politics of the Pact up to the outbreak of war in the mid-1970s. By doing so it will attempt to explain the nature of conflict in Lebanese society as it relates to the dialectic between internal (i.e. confessional) conflict and external (i.e. regional) conflict. By dissecting the overlap between the internal and external components of the conflict, one can understand the swing between order and chaos in Lebanon.

Situating the National Pact

The 1943 National Pact is Lebanon's communal approach to *Realpolitik*. It marks the culmination of the post-1920 rapprochement process between the Maronite and Sunni political elite. The Pact is the quintessential example of political pragmatism: the lowest common denominator shared by the independence leaders. For lack of better alternatives, it was the only available political formula for Lebanon's problematic national identity. Not surprisingly, therefore, the National Pact has been the country's most controversial 'national' agreement: deplored by some, praised by others, though (until 1975) rejected by very few.

The debate over the National Pact is less about its origins and development than about its various communal interpretations; the latter varied over time and in accordance with the shifting regional balance-of-power. In reality, this informal agreement was neither a Pact (or covenant) restricted to Lebanese parties, nor was it a national one. Rather, it was an arrangement involving Lebanese politicians (mostly Maronite and Sunni), Arab leaders (mainly Syrians and Egyptians), and Western powers (the French and the British in particular).

The Pact materialised only when the interests of both internal and external parties seemed better served with the establishment of an independent Lebanon in 1943, in harmony with a pro-Western (i.e., British) Arab order. That was the Pact's hidden agenda, which resulted

in the legitimisation and rationalisation of Lebanon's confessional politics.

Although this agreement was congruent with the interests and political ambitions of the elite, it did not necessarily reflect the perceptions, concerns, and communal priorities of the people. Indeed, the changes within the power base of each community subsequently led to contradictory interpretations of the Pact and to the re-evaluation of the country's national identity in the light of regional and internal changes in the balance-of-power. The National Pact served many immediate domestic and external objectives. For the Lebanese, it provided the most effective way for ridding the country of the French mandate—a desire shared by many Muslim and Christian leaders. Some form of confessional solidarity, though by default, was also detectable among the 'masses'. But soon after independence was achieved, the populist sectarian views of post-1943 Lebanon showed great divergence, which, in turn, mirrored historical differences within Lebanese society. This temporary 'change of mood'[4] among both Christians and Muslims, at a time when many leaders were still uncertain about the outcome of this new political venture, was by itself an unprecedented development. Thus, understanding the nature of these changes will shed light on the origins and evolution of the idea that gave birth to the National Pact as a framework for Christian-Muslim political co-operation until the outbreak of war in 1975.

The Internal component of the National Pact: Maronite and Sunni Double Negation Politics

Although the communal origins of the National Pact can be traced to Mount Lebanon's sectarian political arrangements, notably the *Mutasarrifiya*[5], the idea of a united Christian-Muslim Lebanon in

[4] As Albert Hourani rightly termed the genesis of the National Pact, 'Lebanon: Development of a Political Society', in *The Emergence of the Modern Middle East*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), p. 140.

[5] On the *Mutasarrifiya* arrangement, see John Spagnolo, *France and Ottoman Lebanon, 1861–1914* (London: Ithaca Press, 1977); Kamal Salibi, *The Modern History of Lebanon* (London: Wiedenfeld and Nicolson, 1965); Ass'ad Rustum, *Lubnan fi 'Ahd al-Mutasarrifiya* (Beirut: Dar al-Nahar Lilnashr, 1973); Samir Khalaf, *Persistence and Change in 19th Century Lebanon: A Sociological Essay* (Beirut: American University of Beirut, 1979). See also Engin Deniz Akarli, 'The Administrative Council of Mount

the age of nationalism emerged only after it was already a *fait accompli*—the outcome of the establishment of Greater Lebanon in 1920. Consequently, for reasons of greater communal harmony, confessional differences had to be minimised and de-emphasised as political realism came to prevail.

The controversy centred on Sunni rejection of a Greater Lebanon 'separated' from the newly-established state of Syria, then viewed as the bastion of Arab nationalism.[6] For the Sunnis, 1920 Lebanon was an act of French colonialism aimed at dividing what they perceived to be an otherwise united 'Arab nation.' For the Christians, however, particularly those advocating the enlargement of 'smaller Lebanon' (the *Mutasarrifiya*), Greater Lebanon was justified on historical, political, and economic grounds[7] and was viewed as the 'guarantee' for their free and independent existence in the largely Muslim Arab world. Thus, as some Maronite politicians sought to preserve the political boundaries of 1920 Lebanon, many Sunni leaders remained adamant in their rejection of that new entity demanding, instead, unity with Syria.[8] This continued to be the case until the early 1940s.

But no sooner had a Constitution been adopted, an assembly created, and a state bureaucracy established than a change of attitude among several Muslim leaders began to emerge. By the early 1930s, a number of Christian and Muslim intellectuals and politicians were forwarding new ideas and interpretations aimed at attracting a larger multisectarian audience.

Developments within the Maronite and Sunni communities left

Lebanon', in Nadim Shehadi and Dana Haffar Mills (eds.), *Lebanon, A History of Conflict and Consensus* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1988), pp. 79–100.

[6] On Syria's Arab nationalist politics during the mandate, see Philip S. Khoury, *Syria and the French Mandate: the Politics of Arab Nationalism*, 1920–1945 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987).

[7] See, for example, Yusuf al-Sawda, *Fi Sabil al-Istiqlal, 1906–1922* (Beirut: Dar al-Rihani Liltiba'a wal Nashr, n.d.). See also M. Jouplain (pseudonym for Boulus Nujaim), *La question du Liban* (Jounieh: n.p., 1961). See also Marwan Buheiry, 'Bulus Nujaim and the Grand Liban Ideal, 1908–1919', in Marwan R. Buheiry (ed.), *Intellectual Life in the Arab East* (Beirut: American University of Beirut, 1981), pp. 62–83

[8] The best comprehensive study of the political orientations of the Sunni community towards post-1920 Greater Lebanon is that of Najla Wadih Atiya, 'the Attitude of the Lebanese Sunni towards the State of Lebanon', Ph.D. Thesis, University of London, 1973.

far-reaching effects on Christian-Muslim relations, and thus on the French mandate. The attitude of the Maronite Patriarch towards the French and the activities of several influential personalities advocating a non-partisan, open approach to confessional politics were particularly revealing. As early as the mid-1920s, a number of Maronite politicians began to press demands for greater political autonomy from the French.[9] These efforts resulted in the proclamation of the 1926 Lebanese Constitution.[10]

Later, erratic French actions (e.g., the suspension of the Constitution in 1932) antagonised supporters of the French and polarised politics. As a result, French policy came under increasing criticism from several Maronite leaders and, above all, from the Church. One of the earliest strong voices was that of the Maronite Bishop of Beirut, Ignatius Mubarak, who not only organised rallies and strikes against the French in 1933, but also called for more co-operation with the National Bloc leaders in Syria, then viewed as the leading anti-French Arab nationalists in the region.[11]

Before long, in 1935, relations between Maronite Patriarch ʿArida and the French High Commissioner reached breaking point. The issue of discord centred on the future status of the tobacco concern, whose

[9] For a general survey of the various currents that marked Lebanese public opinion prior to 1920, see Georges Adib Karam, *L'Opinion publique libanaise et la question du Liban (1918–1920)*, (Beirut: Publications de l'Université Libanaise, 1981). On the uneasy relationship between Maronite leaders and French authorities in the early 1920s, see Lyne Loheac, *Daoud Ammoun et la création de l'état libanais*, (Paris: Klinksieck, 1978), pp. 125–145. Some Maronite intellectuals remained opposed to the formation of Greater Lebanon for political or ideological reasons. See, for example, Cheikh Edouard El-Dahdah, *Siyasa la Wijdan: Bahth fi Istiqlal Lubnan al-Kabir* (Beirut: Tabbara Publishing, 1926). See also, Fadia Kiwan, 'La perception du Grand-Liban chez les maronites dans la période du mandat', in Shehadi and Mills, op. cit., pp. 124–148.

[10] At the time the French showed moderation in Lebanon partly because of problems they faced in Syria. See Khoury, op. cit., pp. 151–204. On the politics of the Constitution, see Meir Zamir, *The Formation of Modern Lebanon* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), pp. 204–215.

[11] See Edmond Rabbath, *La formation historique du Liban politique et constitutionnel* (Beirut: Librarie Orientale, 1973), p. 398. See also Muhib Hamadeh, *Tarikh 'Alaqat al-Biqa'iyun Bil Suriyin Wa 'Istratijyat al-Biqa' fi al-Muwajaha al-Suriya al-Isra'iliya, Vol. 1, 1918–1936*, (Beirut: n.p. 1982), pp. 280–81. The author cites a letter from French High Commissioner Ponsot to the Quai d'Orsay in which he expresses concern over Bishop Mubarak's activism and speeches against French policy.

licence was about to expire. The Patriarch was vehemently opposed to another 25 years of monopolistic French control over the Régie des Tabacs et Tombacs and demanded the opening up of the tobacco industry licensing and trade to the public. These demands were voiced in the name of protecting the national economy and the interests of the people.[12] As Edmond Rabbath pointed out, '... l'année 1935 fit apparaître les premiers symptomes d'une agitation authentiquement Libanaise sans corrélation, apparente du moins, avec les mouvements du nationalisme syrien.'[13]

Moreover, in line with the Patriarch's demand for greater Lebanese control over the country's political and economic resources, he established a working relationship with Syrian leaders, who began to pay him visits in Bkirki.[14] By 1935, the changing attitude of the Maronite Patriarch was expressed by the following statement: ' . . . J'ai montré que je m'occupais avec intérêt de la question syrienne. Le Liban et la Syrie sont en effet liés par la communauté de langue, des moeurs, des traditions, d'intérêts économiques. C'est pourquoi il est difficile d'établir entre eux une séparation absolue.'[15]

[12] Since the mid-1930s, Patriarch 'Arida became a frequent critic of the French. In 1936, he submitted a memorandum in which he outlined his grievances against the mandate administration, including French monopoly over the tobacco industry in Lebanon. See Pierre 'Arida, *Le Liban et la France: Mémoire sur la situation générale du Liban adressé par le Patriarche des Maronites à la sous Commission Parlementaire designée pour étudier la situation des pays sous mandat français* (Beirut: Imprimerie al-Ma'arad, 1936). Moreover, 1935 was a troublesome year for the French. In addition to political controversy, economic disturbances leading to strikes by groups as varied as the butchers in Zahleh, the taxi drivers, and the lawyers in Beirut. See Stephen Hemsley Longrigg, *Syria and Lebanon under the French Mandate* (Beirut: Librairie du Liban, 1968), pp. 205–7. In a letter to the French foreign ministry, the High Commissioner wrote that the Patriarch was behind the disturbances and that this would benefit Syrian leaders. Hamadeh, op. cit., p. 283. Indeed, strikes were observed simultaneously in Beirut and Damascus. For a colourful account of these events, see Iskandar Riashi, *Qabl wa ba'd, 1918 Ila 1941*, (n.p. ,1955), pp. 136–145.

[13] Rabbath, op. cit., p. 401.

[14] In 1935, the Maronite Patriarch's critical attitude towards the French won him words of praise in Damascus. As stated in Khoury, 'Denunications of Shaykh Taj as the "enemy of Allah" followed by praise for the Maronite Patriarch were chanted in the bazaars and streets of Damascus.' Khoury, cp. cit., p. 454.

[15] Rabbath, op. cit., p. 406. Quoted from the French language daily, *Le Jour*, September 11, 1935.

Even more revealing was the communiqué, addressed to the French High Commissioner issued by the Patriarchate after a general meeting of Maronite prelates on 6 February 1935. The five-point statement stressed: (1) the preservation of the entity of Lebanon created in 1920; (2) the demand for independence within the framework of maintaining 'friendly relations with sister country, Syria,' particularly on the economic and social levels; (3) the adoption of a new Constitution which proclaims Lebanon's full independence and recognises individual and collective liberties; (4) the signing of a treaty with France similar to the one sought by Syria; and finally, (5) membership in the League of Nations.[16] Particularly important was the fact that these demands were viewed by Bkirki as the logical sequence of demands aimed at achieving the independence of Greater Lebanon as stated in the memorandum submitted to the French government in 1919 by the Lebanese delegation, then headed by Patriarch Houwayek.[17]

While the Patriarchate's position marked a qualitative change in Maronite politics under the mandate, particularly with respect to its open advocacy of co-operation with Syria's nationalist leaders and the achievement of full independence, major Sunni Lebanese leaders in the mid-1930s not only remained opposed to the Maronite position, they even voiced their objection to Syria's National Bloc leaders for their policy of rapprochement with the Maronite Patriarch. Such a policy, it was believed, would undermine Sunni unionist objectives with Syria.[18]

In reality, Sunni rejection of the attachment of their territories to post-1920 Greater Lebanon was not simply an act of desperation by local notables disenchanted with the state of affairs that prevailed during the mandate. Rather, it was an organised, systematic effort which drew together leading political figures from the country's three major coastal cities—Tripoli, Beirut, and Sidon—whenever they felt a weakening in their position (either towards the French authorities or towards the changing attitude of Syria's National Bloc leaders) regarding the future status of the disputed territories.

Sunni political activism began as early as 1923. The occasion was the replacement of General Gouraud, the first French High Commissioner,

[16] Ibid., pp. 407–8.

[17] Ibid.

[18] Khoury, op. cit., pp. 451–454.

by General Weygand the new High Commissioner in Syria and Lebanon. In a memorandum submitted to Weygand, Sunni leaders, mostly from the three coastal cities (Beirut, Tripoli, and Sidon), listed their grievances. They ranged from rejection to being part of Greater Lebanon, which they considered to go against the principle of self-determination as outlined by President Wilson; to demands of equal treatment between the territory of the *Mutasarrifiya* and the newly-added territories to Mount Lebanon.[19]

The second major Sunni attempt to reject the *fait accompli* of Greater Lebanon occurred in 1926. A series of 'conferences', known as *Mu'tamarat al-Sahil,* (conferences of the Coast) were held in Beirut, Tripoli, and Sidon, with the aim of submitting to the authorities a reply to questions presented by a special committee charged to draft a Constitution for Greater Lebanon. Not only did the participants in the three gatherings refuse to respond to the questions, they reiterated their rejection of their overall status in Greater Lebanon.[20] In addition to the general atmosphere of political dismay, leaders from Tripoli registered economic grievances resulting from the 'separation' of the Port of Tripoli from the Syrian interior.[21]

Another Sunni reaction was voiced this time in Syria at a conference held in Damascus in 1928. The gathering, backed by Syria's nationalist leaders, was headed by Tripoli leader, Abdul-Hamid Karamé. It included leaders from Lebanon's coastal cities and from Syrian cities, then separated from Syria (Latakia, Tartus, Banias)[22]. The gathering, held to coincide with the drafting of a Constitution in Syria, was another opportunity for 'the inhabitants of the deprived areas' to renew their demands for integration with Damascus, 'the source of true patriotism.'[23]

Even the candidacy of a well-known Sunni notable from Tripoli, Shaykh Muhammad al-Jisr, to the presidency in 1932 was met by Sunni opposition notably by Riad al-Solh. It was believed that the election of

[19] Sa'id Murad, *al-Haraka al-Wihdawiya fi Lubnan Bayn al-Harbayn al-'Alamiyatayn, 1914–1964* (Beirut: Ma'ahad al-Inma' al-'Arabi, 1986), pp. 164–168.

[20] Ibid., pp. 174–188.

[21] Ibid., pp. 178–179. See also Zamir op. cit., 192–199.

[22] Riad al-Solh helped organise this gathering in Damascus. Ibid., pp. 195–201.

[23] Ibid., p. 196. The Syrian Constitution of 1928 stated 'that Syria, including Lebanon, Transjordan, and Palestine, was one and indivisible.' Khoury, op. cit., p. 340.

al-Jisr would complicate matters for the 'unionists.'[24] Ironically, al-Jisr's candidacy, supported by influential Maronite politicians, was opposed by the French who responded by suspending the Constitution.

The fourth gathering was held in October 1933 in the house of Beirut Sunni notable, Salim Salam. It included well-known 'unionists' like Abdul-Hamid Karamé and Omar Bayhum from Beirut. Once again familiar grievances were uttered, but unlike previous conferences, demands now were more comprehensive and better articulated, addressing several issues ranging from the problem of unity with Syria to various aspects of French mandatory rule.[25]

But the more interesting gathering was the 'conference of the Coast' of March 10, 1936, the last to be held under the mandate. The reason for the convening of the 'conference,' also held at Salim Salam's house in Beirut, had to do with the talks that were scheduled to take place between the French government and Syrian leaders, in Paris, regarding the future of Syrian-French relations. These talks resulted in the signing of a treaty between the two countries. A similar treaty was signed between Lebanon and France, but both treaties were not ratified by the French Assembly, following the resignation of the Blum government under whose auspices the talks had been initiated.[26]

Unlike previous conferences, the 1936 gathering included non-Muslim participants, notably Salah Labaki and Yusuf Yazbek, both Maronites from Mount Lebanon. The latter called for Syrian unity on ideological grounds.[27] But the particular significance of the gathering lies less in the usual unionists than in the growing uncertainty of Sunni leaders over the intentions and the priorities of Syria's National Bloc leaders on whom they depended for support in their dealings with the French in Lebanon. This was clearly expressed by Salim Salam, the conference's chairman. Commenting on the circumstances, Salam explained that he 'called for the conference because we read in the press

[24] Murad, op. cit., pp. 215–217.

[25] Ibid., pp. 220–223.

[26] Khoury, op. cit., pp. 485–493.

[27] Labaki took part in the meeting as a member of the SSNP. Yazbek was an ex-communist. Murad, op. cit., pp. 238–9. On the changing attitude of Sunni leaders towards Greater Lebanon in the 1930s, including the 1936 gathering, see Raghid Solh, 'The Attitude of the Arab Nationalists towards Greater Lebanon during the 1930s', in Shehadi and Mills, op. cit., pp. 149–165.

that the [National] Bloc will negotiate with the French government a treaty on the basis of integrating some areas within Syria but not all separated areas. For that reason', he added, 'we invited the inhabitants of the attached areas to discuss this dangerous matter.'[28]

Sunni fears were not unfounded. Fifteen years after the mandate, Syrian leaders grew intolerant of the stalemate in Syrian-French relations and definitely more interested and concerned about Syria proper rather than about Greater Lebanon's confessional politics and the grievances of those Muslim leaders who remained opposed to having their areas attached to Lebanon. Syrian leaders' indifference was revealed later in the terms of the treaty in which there was no reference to the added territories to Lebanon.[29] Even prior to the signing of the treaty, the attitude of Syrian leaders towards Lebanon began to change as relations between the Maronite Patriarch and National Bloc leaders improved, thus resulting in a working relationship between the two parties. Indeed, only three days after the gathering, a delegation from the National Bloc visited Patriarch 'Arida and expressed its condemnation of the conference's resolutions.[30]

Yet, despite the negative position of most Sunni leaders, the meeting did give rise to the formulation of an important document by a 'dissident' Sunni politician, Kazem al-Solh, in which he voiced his objection regarding then conferees' misguided approach to the problem. Unlike other Muslim leaders, he saw the possibility of finding a common ground between Christian and Muslim views regarding Lebanon's future status, independent of Syria though within a larger Arab entity.

By the mid-1930s, two trends began to take shape within the Sunni elite. While sharing the ultimate goal of Arab unity, Sunni leaders differed in their approach towards achieving that objective. One called for outward unity with Syria, while the other emphasised the necessity of bringing about internal unity within each Arab country as a first step

[28] Murad, op. cit., p. 241.

[29] See Khoury, op. cit, pp. 486–493. At the National Bloc's Congress held in Homs in 1932, Syrian nationalists stood for the territorial integrity and independence of Syria and added that Lebanon 'can decide her own political fate within her pre-1920 borders.' That was a departure from the earlier position of the National Bloc and from the 1928 draft version of the Syrian Constitution. Khoury, Ibid, p. 263.

[30] Murad, op. cit., pp. 264–5.

toward the realisation of a united Arab nation.[31] The latter approach, to which Kazem al-Solh subscribed, provoked a positive response among Christian leaders. All the more so since, by the late 1930s, it was attracting an increasing number of Sunni leaders, particularly those who enjoyed strong credibility as Arab nationalists.

Kazem al-Solh did not endorse the resolutions of the conference. His reading of the problem deserves analysis, for it offers the first well-articulated Sunni position regarding the acceptance of an independent Lebanon in some form of undefined unity with the Arab world. Later, this constituted the dominant Sunni reading of the 1943 National Pact.[32] Solh's first objection had to do with a very practical approach to the question: that is, whether 'union or separation' should be 'negotiated' with the other side or pleaded with the French High Commissioner. He criticised the conferees for having sought French intervention in the matter, as if colonial rulers are entitled to decide such a 'national' (*qawmiyya*) question.

In his view, the problem had its roots in the Arab national quest for independence and unity. Hence, it was a national rather than a political problem. In other words, as he put it, the problem was: either creating a country in union with Syria and alienating half the population, or leaving Mount Lebanon outside a united Greater Syria thereby inducing the Christians to seek protection and surrender to colonial domination. In the latter scenario Mount Lebanon would become a 'French province', that is, a centre of subversion against the Arab nation.

The formulation of the problem in such 'nationalist' terminology represented a change of attitude on the part of the few Sunni leaders who subscribed to Solh's views. According to this revised interpretation of Arab nationalism, there was room for an independent 1920 Lebanon, now that its acceptance in the Arab fold had become a

[31] Atiya writes that by 1928, among those Sunni leaders who were opposed to Greater Lebanon two broad orientations emerged. One called for outward union with Syria, favoured by Salim Ali Salam and Abdel-Hamid Karamé; and another, calling for Pan-Arabism, favoured by Riad al-Solh and Khayr al-din al-Ahdab, p. 131. See, also, Raghid Solh, op. cit., pp. 157–161.

[32] Murad, op. cit., p. 250; see text of Kazem al-Solh's objections to the resolutions of the 'Conference of the Coast' entitled 'Mushkilat al-Ittisal wa al-Infisal fi Lubnan' in Basim al-Jisr, op. cit., pp. 466–478.

'national' question which concerned those truly committed to the cause of Arab unity. Thus, an independent Greater Lebanon became an integral part of a larger Arab entity.

For Solh, the 'separation' of Lebanon was not dissimilar from that of independent Syria and Iraq, particularly since Arab unity would emerge only when 'national' unity (*watan*) is achieved in each country (*qutr*). In this way, the acquiescence to the political separation (*infisal*) of a country would, in the end, propel the growth of genuine Arabism and pave the way for the ultimate objective of Arab unity.

But this, Solh stated, would require greater understanding on the part of the 'unionists' of the concerns of those advocating an independent 1920 Lebanon. This, in other words, would require a better 'scenario' (*ikhraj*) for bringing about a rapprochement between Christian and Sunni views of Greater Lebanon. Even the terminology used—which had come to imply that words like 'unity' and 'Syria' are synonymous to 'Islam,' while the word 'Lebanon' is identified with 'Christianity,'—should be altered, Solh affirmed.

Solh, then, stressed that the time was ripe for open-mindedness and rationalism on the part of the Sunni 'negativists', as greater openness to the idea of Arabism was becoming more evident among an increasing number of Christian leaders. He cited that the positive attitude of the Maronite Patriarch towards Syria and his open criticism of the French were indicative of the change towards the desired approach to Arab unity. Thus a more balanced and realistic approach would help allay Christian fears and facilitate dialogue.

A measure of pragmatism was equally needed, but this time for a simple practical reason. As Solh wrote to the 'unionists': 'imagine the awkward situation in which the residents of Syrian-controlled Beirut would have to request special passes from the Lebanese government (that of the Mountain) in order to travel to Damascus, their capital city'.

For Solh, the issue was less the form of government of an independent Lebanon than the formation of a larger political entity which would embody the true ideal of Arab nationalism. In order to achieve that goal, Arab nationalists should be willing to make great sacrifices by placing the interest of the 'nation' (*watan*) above and beyond any other regional (*mantaqa*) and narrow local interests. Arab unity would then materialise through an evolutionary process and with the consent of the people.

This would certainly be a better alternative to that of having the French authorities pursue a divide-and-rule policy in the Arab world. Contrary to the 'unionist' belief, writes Solh, a united Arab nation would materialise only if its real meaning was voluntarily accepted by the people, who would come to realise that Arabism stood above local and other sectarian identifications.

In short, according to Solh, Sunni leaders should relinquish their negative attitude towards Lebanon. Instead, they should become missionaries of Arab nationalism among the Christian Lebanese. All the more so since Christians were showing greater willingness to find a common denominator with Arab nationalists. In order to achieve that, two steps would be necessary. First, a better approach (*ikhraj*) that would not alienate the Christians would have to be adopted; second, Sunni leaders should be willing to forego, at least temporarily, Syrian unity as a concessionary measure to foil French colonial designs on Lebanon. By so doing, they would inevitably advance the cause of Arab unity.

In return for Christian rejection of French mandatory rule, Muslim leaders would acquiesce to a Christian-advocated independent Greater Lebanon which, eventually, would become part of an emerging united Arab nation. Clearly, Sunni acceptance of such an independent political construct for Greater Lebanon was conditional: it presupposed Christian conversion to Sunni-sponsored Arab nationalism.

Solh's novel reading of Christian-Muslim relations, which went beyond the problem of the attached territories, was well received by Maronite leaders, but it was yet to find an audience within the mainstream of Sunni 'unionists'. That was to occur later in the early 1940s.

Not unlike Sunni leaders, Maronite politicians had their own 'conditions' and reservations about the arrangement. They, too, had assumptions and long-term objectives. Although receptive to the idea of moderate Arab nationalism, they saw a difference between Lebanese national priorities and the aspirations and zeal of some Arab nationalists. In Maronite eyes, the 'sacrifice' consisted of the acceptance of a moderate and politically balanced Sunni reading of Arab nationalism. Indeed, opposing the French was one thing, but championing the cause of full Arab unity was something entirely different.

Contrary to Sunni assumptions, the transition from anti-colonialism

to Arab nationalism was not spontaneous from a Maronite standpoint. Maronite embrace of Arab nationalism was a function of tangible criteria, as opposed to the rather emotionally driven of Sunni espousal of Arabism. Indeed, Christian 'concession' to Arabism was a *mariage de raison* based on pragmatism, interest, and especially, belief in the secular dimension of Arabism. That was particularly the view of liberal minded Christian intellectuals who, by the late 1930s, became staunch advocates of national Christian-Muslim understanding.

Moreover, Christians were torn between other competing national ideologies, ranging from anti-Arab Syrian nationalism[33] to Lebanese nationalism.[34] The notion of a united Arab nation had yet to assert its political viability and ideological credentials as a better alternative to other populist nationalist orientations. Groups advocating non-Arab nationalist platforms were active in the 1930s, notably Syrian nationalists (SSNP), but they had no significant impact on confessional politics and the alliances. Nor did they affect the course of events which culminated in the National Pact. They were too radical to be accepted by the mainstream both at the political and ideological levels.

By the late 1930s nothing seemed irreversible in the eyes of Lebanon's communal elite. The concept of Greater Lebanon was still negotiable and whatever Pact was likely to emerge, it was vague and open to debate. The first major turning point in the debate was independence in 1943. But that was only a temporary respite made possible by the favourable political atmosphere of the mid-1940s.

The External Component of the National Pact: Spears versus De Gaulle

Notwithstanding differences among Lebanese leaders, agreement on a 'national' deal could not have been possible in the absence of direct external intervention. Were it not for Syrian, British and, to a lesser extent, Egyptian involvement to facilitate negotiations between Sunni and Maronite politicians,, the National Pact would not have materialised in the way that it did.

[33] On the SSNP, see Labib Zuwiyya Yamak, *The Syrian Social Nationalist Party, an Ideological Analysis* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969).

[34] See, for example, Charles Corm, *La montagne inspirée* (Beirut: Editions de la Revue Phénicienne, 1987). Corm was a close associate of Emile Eddé.

The green light for Sunni acceptance to entertain the idea of an independent Lebanon came originally from Damascus, particularly from some influential leaders of Syria's National Bloc who favoured Sunni co-operation with 'pro-Arab' Maronite leaders. Moreover, in June 1942, a British-sponsored meeting in Cairo between Maronite presidential aspirant Bechara al-Khoury, Egyptian Prime Minister Mustafa Nahhas Pasha and Syrian President, Jamil Mardam, resulted in the first 'official' Arab blessing and encouragement for Khoury to pursue a course of action leading to the independence of Lebanon in its 1920 borders.[35]

Once Khoury received Arab blessing, the search for a Sunni partner and a respected Arab nationalist leader began. The perfect candidate was Riad al-Solh, who, apparently at the request of Syrian leaders, decided to co-operate with Bechara al-Khoury in the Summer of 1943.[36] Many observers believe that it was during these meetings that the National Pact formula was devised. As stated by Najla Atiyah, it was Khoury's agreement with Syrian and Arab leaders which facilitated his election to the presidency and the appointment of Solh for the premiership.[37]

These developments laid the groundwork for the Solh-Khoury alliance during the parliamentary elections in the summer of 1943. Their co-operation led to the formal enunciation of the National Pact in October 1943 and the concurrent abolition of the mandate. Khoury and Solh, as well as other cabinet members, were arrested by the French a few weeks later and held in Rashaya for a few days. Their release on 22 November was declared the official independence day of the Lebanese republic.[38]

Aside from the Arab component in the making of the National Pact,

[35] Many sources confirm Syria and Egypt's backing of Sunni leaders, particularly of Riad al-Solh, to co-operate with Bechara al-Khoury. See Georges Catroux, *Dans la bataille de la Méditerranée, Egypte-Levant-Afrique du Nord, 1940–1944. Témoignages et Commentaires* (Paris, 1949), p. 259; Bechara al-Khoury, *Haqa'iq Lubnaniya* (Beirut: al-Dar al-Lubnaniya Lilnashr, 1983), Vol. 1, pp. 242–252; Atiya, op. cit., pp. 176–181; al-Jisr, op. cit., pp. 106–115.

[36] See the account of Yusuf Ibrahim Yazbek, confirmed by president al- Khoury in 1960 in Rabbath, op. cit., pp. 519–526.

[37] Atiya, op. cit., p. 180.

[38] For a description of the events leading to independence in 1943, see Munir Taqi al-Din, *Wiladat al-Istiqlal* (Beirut: Dar al-'Ilm Lilmalayin, 1953), pp. 50–218.

which provided a legitimate 'cover' for Christian-Muslim co-operation in an independent Lebanon in the post-colonial era, the decisive change hinged on two developments: first, the deteriorating French position in the Levant; and second, British-French rivarly, which reached unprecedented heights during the second world war.

Ever since France became the mandatory power in Syria and Lebanon, the Paris government had to deal with successive problems, conflicts, and armed rebellions, particularly in Syria. Unlike the British, who were seen by some Arab nationalists, notably in Hashemite circles, as friendly to the Arabs[39], the French clashed with the Arabs, and not any Arabs, but with the most nationalist Arabs, then based in Damascus. Not only did the French enter Damascus, 'the bastion of Arabism,' by force, but they also pursued a policy aimed at dividing up the area into various statelets thereby preventing the rise of the united 'Arab nation' as claimed by Arab nationalists. Added to that, France acquired its position in the region not because it enjoyed military superiority in the Levant, but because it was a war ally of the British, and because the latter had to fulfil its obligations as stated in the Sykes-Picot agreement signed secretly in 1916.

Regardless of changes in French policy and the nature of French interests in Syria and Lebanon[40], French influence in the Levant had begun to decline even before the second world war and the German occupation of France. Clearly the war greatly weakened French colonial rule and complicated the task of the Vichy government in areas where the Free French under de Gaulle began to have the upper hand. That was the case in Syria and Lebanon where the Free French faced an acute predicament. They sought to retake control over the Levant from the Vichy forces, but had limited means to achieve that objective. For that, they had to enlist the support of two parties whose interests ran against the French policy of upholding the empire. These were the British and the local nationalist leadership in Lebanon and Syria. The Free French needed British military assistance to regain control over the Levant states just as political support from the local nationalists was needed to instigate opposition to the local Vichy authorities.

[39] See, for example, George Antonius, *The Arab Awakening*, (New York: Paragon Books, 1979), pp. 164–183 and pp. 243–275.

[40] For details, see Khoury, op. cit., pp. 27–43.

The Free French were left with little room for manoeuvre. They had no choice but to offer a better alternative to the colonial rule of the Vichy government. That new tactic was translated into a Free French promise in 1941 to grant full independence to the Lebanese and Syrians. But once the Free French position in the Levant and the Vichy Forces were defeated, they were no longer willing to live up to their promise and deliver independence. As a result, conflict was bound to occur between the French and local nationalists.

The outcome, however, may not have been in favour of local nationalists had the British remained neutral. But that was not to be, and a short, but intense and decisive British-French rivalry ensued. This weakened the French even further while strengthening the position of the local nationalists. The outcome was independence in the mid-1940s.

What is striking here is not the traditional political rivalry that marks relations between two rival colonial powers but rather the decisive role that British Major-General Edward Louis Spears played in shaping the course of French-British relations in the Levant which, in turn, shaped the course of events in Lebanon. A recent study on English-French rivalry in Syria and Lebanon in the first half of the 1940s, has highlighted the crucial role played by General Spears in directing events in Lebanon in ways which otherwise would not have evolved in the way that they did.[41]

Strongly contested by French General Catroux, the appointment of Spears as British Minister to the Syrian and Lebanese governments and Head of Anglo-French liaison in the Levant in 1942, sent alarming signals to the Free French. Even before presenting his credentials, Spears did not hesitate to make his views clear. Replying to de Gaulle's standard explanation about the difficulty of giving real independence to Syria and Lebanon, as promised in 1941, Spears said that 'in that case there were likely to be serious difficulties in the Levant, as I happened to be accredited to two independent Republics and not to puppet Governments existing on General Catroux's and General de Gaulle's favour.'[42] That was 'Spears' declaration of war.' [43] Indeed

[41] A.B. Gaunson, *The Anglo-French Clash in Lebanon and Syria, 1940–45* (London: Macmillan Press Ltd, 1987).

[42] Ibid., pp. 86–87.

political and diplomatic war began, and it did not end until after the recall of Spears in December 1944. By then, the facts that had been created in the Levant had become irreversible. After having been a champion of Free French, 'Spears' Francophobia' grew strong as he became 'very bellicosely minded *vis-à-vis* de Gaulle.' [44] He went as far as to call for the removal of General de Gaulle, for as Spears argued, this will serve 'Britain's Arab interest.'[45]

Although Spears' crusade against the French presence in the Levant was no secret, what was significant and rather unexpected was the fact that the British General was not acting on orders from either the Prime Minister or the Foreign Office. As Churchill gave support to his friend Spears, while paying little attention to the Levant,[46] Spears ended up pursuing policies of his own which were not always in line with official British policy towards Syria and Lebanon.

What Churchill had in mind was an arrangement that would give limited independence to the Levant states similar to the treaty signed between Britain and Iraq in 1930.[47] But that was not what Spears had in mind, now that he had become a convert to the cause of Lebanese and Syrian independence. As a well-acquainted senior consular official based in Beirut explained: Spears was motivated 'not only' by his feud with de Gaulle and his contempt for colonial Frenchmen, but also because he had become 'a genuine and jealous Arabophile, which he was to remain for the rest of his life.'[48] And with contradictory British policy,[49] Spears had enough leeway to carry out policies to drive the French out of the Levant while claiming to be implementing the Prime Minister's policy to the best of his ability.[50]

Spears was instrumental in speeding up the process which culminated in independence first in Lebanon and then in Syria. Not only did he press for holding the 1943 elections which brought to Parliament an

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[43] Ibid.
[44] Ibid., p. 66
[45] Ibid., p. 117
[46] Ibid., p. 116
[47] Ibid., pp. 77–8
[48] Ibid., pp. 69–70, as stated by Sir Geoffery Furlonge.
[49] Ibid., p. 78.
[50] Ibid

anti-French majority, but he was 'the chief source of inspiration'[51] for Lebanese leaders who sought to end the French mandate. In the words of a British official who witnessed the events of November, 1943: 'The Lebanese Government [was] doubtless backed by Spears [who had] orders from the Foreign office earlier telling him [to] dissuade the Lebanese Government from taking this action. He boast[ed] that Riad Solh the Prime Minister did nothing without his advice ... I consider Spears at least 75% responsible for all the trouble ...' [52]

The 'action' that the Lebanese government took was to eliminate from the Constitution and the laws all provisions for outsiders to interfere in the affairs of Lebanon. That was tantamount to the official termination of the mandate. The crisis continued to escalate until the imprisoned Lebanese leaders were released on November 22, 1943 but only after the British threatened to declare martial law if their demands were not met.[53]

General Spears was instrumental in hastening the process of change in favour of local nationalists and against the French, all the more so because Spears went beyond the confines of official British policy (even if, as some believe, the French in the Levant were, after the outbreak of the second world war, living on borrowed time). Commenting on Spears' conduct, Duff Cooper, the British Ambassador to the French National Committee, believed that 'the conduct of General Spears [suggested] that it was his policy to drive the French out of Syria and the Lebanon, with the assistance of the natives ... This was not the policy of the Foreign Office, nor of the Prime Minister, but to attempt to persuade the French of this was [a] waste of time, so long as Spears remained at Beirut.'[54] He then wrote to Churchill that Spears 'seems to have altered the whole of his European policy and to have become definitely, if not violently, francophobe ... I do not believe there will be peace in the Levant so long as [Spears] remains there.'[55]

Churchill, who was not directly involved in Levant politics, now looked into the Lebanese file and sent Spears a message on March 10,

[51] Ibid., p. 124

[52] Ibid.

[53] Ibid., p. 136. November 22, Lebanon's independence day, was the deadline given by Spears to the French to meet British demands.

[54] Ibid., p. 147

[55] Ibid., psè p. 147–8

1944, saying: 'from your long series of telegrams which I have read you seem drawn too much to a pro-native and anti-French line. I told you in Cairo that I had no wish to destroy French influence in Syria ... You are however going further than I wish and anyone can see you have become bitterly anti-French ... You should be careful to avoid an anti-French policy in Syria.'[56] By the end of the year, before December 15, Spears was asked to resign.

By 1945, some facts had become irreversible: Lebanon had achieved independence at an opportune time and the National Pact was proclaimed. Had events been delayed for one or two years, it would have been more difficult to reach the kind of agreement that was reached in 1943. Indeed, by the end of the war, the French had regained some of the influence they had lost during the war and the British would, therefore, have been more accommodating. Consequently, General Spears' virulent anti-French policy, (although initially he was a supporter and a friend of de Gaulle) would have been neutralised or perhaps better monitored and controlled by London. But that did not happen. In the final analysis, the National Pact was, in part, the product of the particular circumstances that prevailed in the first half of the 1940s. It could not have been brokered otherwise.

The Making of a Confessional Elite for Independent Lebanon

The need for several Arab and non-Arab 'midwives' for the birth of the National Pact was no unprecedented development in the mandate period, especially at a time when the political boundaries of most modern Middle Eastern states were still undefined. But the communal dimension of the deal and the way in which it reflected the regional balance-of-power were somewhat unique to Lebanon.

In reality, a similar pattern of power-balancing involving internal and external actors have persisted in one form or another throughout Lebanon's post-1943 political process. The Khoury-Solh arrangement was reproduced in almost every presidential election, and after major crises, albeit with different actors and under different regional and international circumstances. So by

[56] Ibid, p. 148.

analysing Lebanon's communal politics in relation to changes in the regional political scene, one can shed light on the foundation and determinants of the Pact and on the nature of Maronite-Sunni interaction in the political process.

One of the far-reaching political repercussions of post-1920 Greater Lebanon was the rise of a new elite tuned to the politics of the mandate. This differed both in its internal and external dimensions from the politics of Mount Lebanon under the *Mutasarrifiya*. The inclusion of the Muslim-inhabited areas into Greater Lebanon not only altered the nature of communal politics, particularly within the Sunni community; it also altered the pattern of Maronite politics both within the community and *vis-à-vis* other communities.

Contrary to major Sunni leaders who were well-established notables in their cities, when Greater Lebanon was formed, several Maronite—and to a lesser extent Shi'a and Druze—leaders rose to prominence in post-1920 Greater Lebanon as a result of the politics of confessional balancing under the French mandate. Among those were the two leading Maronite figures of the mandate: Bechara al-Khoury and Emile Eddé.

Both Eddé and Khoury entered the political scene in the early 1920s with the backing of the French authorities. As Eddé was older than Khoury, he developed earlier ties with the French. But it was only a matter of time before Khoury emerged as the leading rival to Eddé, thanks to French support through the backing of President Charles Debbas. The latter, who had no power base of his own and had limited acquaintance with Lebanon's politics beyond French-dominated government politics in Beirut, saw in Khoury a potentially strong rival to Eddé.[57]

It was not until the mid-1930s that these two Maronite rivals gained national prominence as they became leaders of two parliamentary blocs with supporters from all confessional groups. In fact, neither Eddé nor Khoury owe their political standing to any traditional power base in their home district nor to any prior family involvement in politics. Khoury's father, hailing from a lordly family in the Shuf, was a

[57] See Bechara al-Khoury, op. cit., pp. 117–171. See also Walid 'Awad, *Ashab al-Fakhama, Ru'asa' Lubnan* (Beirut: al-Ahliya Lilnashr wa al-Tawzi', 1977), pp. 24–53. See also Nicolas de Butros, *Je me souviens* (Beyrouth: Librairie Antoine, 1983).

high-placed functionary assisting the Ottoman *Mutasarrif* (governor).[58] Another member of the family, a relative of Khoury, Habib Pasha al-Sa'ad (al-Khoury), served as a member of Mount Lebanon's Administrative Council.[59] In the 1920s, al-Sa'ad was elected to the Representative Council and later to Parliament, while Khoury gained his seat by appointment.

Eddé, however, was an outsider not only to the Maronite political establishment of pre-1920 Lebanon but also to the traditional politics of Mount Lebanon. He was born in Damascus where his father was the Dragoman of the French Consulate, and was little involved in Lebanese politics prior to 1920.[60] Upon his return to Lebanon, after having spent the war years in Egypt, he served as a political advisor to the French.[61]

During more than two decades of mandatory rule neither Khoury nor Eddé entered Parliament through election. Prior to 1943, Eddé was elected once to the Representative Council of Greater Lebanon in 1922 as a Maronite representative of Beirut. A newcomer to the political scene, Eddé's election was possible partly because most Muslims in the city boycotted the election in protest of the inclusion of their areas into Greater Lebanon.[62] Although Khoury and Eddé held the Premiership and the Presidency in the 1920s and 1930s, they did not gain their seat in Parliament through election prior to 1943. Instead they were appointed by the French authorities, first in the short-lived Senate and later in the 1929 and 1934 Parliaments.[63]

[58] al-Khoury, op. cit., pp. 20–59.

[59] On al-Sa'ad's political career, see 'Awad, op. cit., pp. 117–250.

[60] On Eddé's political career, see 'Awad, op. cit., pp. 117–250.

[61] al-Khoury, op. cit., p. 87.

[62] Another reason is that the Maronite candidate in Beirut, George Philippe Tabet, withdrew his candidacy at the request of the French. 'Awad, op. cit., p. 143. See also the account of the American Consul General in Beirut on the election and profile of members of the Representative Council in Walter Browne, *The Political History of Lebanon, 1920–1950*, Vol. I (Salisbury, N.C.: Documentary Publications, 1976), pp. 44–50.

[63] The short-lived Senate formed in 1925 was composed of 16 members appointed by the High Commissioner. Both Eddé and Khoury were members of the Senate. Khoury was appointed in 1927 to fill the seat vacated by Yusuf Nammour. In 1927 the Senate was abolished and later integrated with the Chamber of Deputies. In the unicameral Parliament, the High Commissioner appointed one third of its members. Khoury was Minister of the Interior in the first Cabinet headed by Auguste Pasha Adib. He then

In the 1943 elections Eddé ran in Mount Lebanon, where there was a Christian majority, and was able to secure a seat in Parliament. In 1943 both Eddé and Khoury were elected in Mount Lebanon, but Eddé's National Bloc captured most seats while Khoury relied on the support of political allies in other electoral districts, mostly in Muslim areas, to secure a majority in Parliament.

The rise of the new political elite of the mandate, particularly within the Maronite community, can be attributed to three factors. First, French policy which restructured Lebanon's traditional elitist politics. Second, the rise of a new generation of educated, francophile elite, having a different exposure and background from that of the *Mutasarrifiya* elite. Third, the role of Beirut as the new capital of Greater Lebanon and the headquarters of the French High Commissioner. All three factors contributed to the transformation of Maronite politics and the shift of the centre of power and, by implication, the decision-making process from pre-1920 Mount Lebanon to Beirut.

While traditional leaders of all communities, Druze, Maronites, and Shi'a in particular continued to exercise influence in local politics in their home districts, they were much less influential in Beirut *vis-à-vis* other politicians as well as the French. The Druze Jumblatts and Arslans and the Maronite Khazens, for example, continued to wield influence as the leading political figures in Mount Lebanon, during the mandate. However, they were *de facto* outsiders to the French-dominated politics of Beirut. By contrast, the new generation of Christian politicians who were mostly francophile and Beirut-based, had no following or power base of their own either in Beirut or in the Mountain. It was not until the late 1930s that Khoury and Eddé became 'populist' Maronite leaders, particularly in Mount Lebanon.

The political career of a number of politicians who gained prominence in the 1920s and 1930s was very much in line with these three attributes. That was the case of Lebanon's first president, Charles Debbas. Debbas, born in Damascus, was a Beirut-based Greek Orthodox lawyer, married to a French woman and was very close to the French. Before assuming the Presidency for two consecutive

formed two successive cabinets in 1927 and 1928 and a third cabinet in 1929. Eddé formed a short-lived cabinet in 1929 and was elected President in 1936. For details, see Bechara al-Khoury, op. cit., pp. 139–232.

three-year terms, Debbas held several government posts and was particularly trusted by the French.[64] He was very much the product of the early years of the French mandate, when the French were still in a position to bring politicians with no political background or power base to the presidency and when the political rivalry between the two Maronite-led camps, Eddé and Khoury, was not yet well anchored in the country.

Debbas' case was not unique, especially in the 1920s. Like Debbas, Lebanon's first Prime Minister, Auguste Adib Pasha, was very much the creation of the French authorities. Adib, a Maronite from the Shuf, had been residing in Egypt for many years, where he distinguished himself in government posts in the field of finance.[65] He returned to Lebanon in the early 1920s and was the High Commissioner's choice for Greater Lebanon's first Cabinet after the 1926 Constitution. Adib formed another Cabinet in 1930 but he remained an outsider to Lebanese politics and did not play any significant role in mandatory politics in the 1930s and 1940s.

The making of a new elite was conducive to changes which were not favourable to French interests. That occurred in the 1940s when the country became divided into two camps each espousing a political platform. But while events narrowed down differences between Maronite and Sunni leaders, there was no guarantee that an agreement was about to emerge. A few questions come to mind. For example, why was Bechara al-Khoury, rather than his rival Emile Eddé, favoured by Arab leaders and by the British, at a time when, according to some accounts, Eddé's relations with Sunni leaders, particularly with Riad al-Solh, were better than Khoury's?[66]

Similarly, why was Riad al-Solh rather than the more pragmatic

[64] See 'Awad, op. cit, pp. 12–54.

[65] The American Consul General describes Adib as 'an old, experienced official, of the reactionary type, belonging to no political faction and having no particular following': Browne, op. cit., p. 133. Adib originally is of the Deeb family from Dayr al-Qamar.

[66] Maronite politician and later Secretary General of Eddé's National Bloc, Kisrawan al-Khazen was a close friend of Riad al-Solh's father, Rida al-Solh. It was through the mediation of al-Khazen with French authorities that Riad al-Solh was allowed to return from exile to Lebanon after 1920. Although at odds politically, Eddé and Solh had closer personal relations than between Solh and Khoury. Two different associates of Eddé acquainted with the politics of the mandate have conveyed this information.

Muhammad Al-Jisr and Khayr al-Din al-Ahdab, or the 'negativists' like Karamé and Salam, both influential notables in Tripoli and Beirut respectively, willing to reach a compromise with Christian 'separatists'? The answers to these questions will highlight the process of communal intra-elite rivalries which paved the way for the emergence of a common conception of an independent 1943 Lebanon but only with an Arab facade.

By the mid 1930s, the leadership of the Maronite community was contested between two ambitious politicians: Bechara al-Khoury and Emile Eddé, both having an eye on the presidency. While both leaders were francophile and lawyers by profession (Khoury did his legal training at Eddé's law office), they differed greatly in their political style, personality, and family background.

One inherent advantage Khoury had over Eddé was that Khoury came to the political scene at a time when Eddé had already undermined his 'Arab' credentials in the eyes of many Muslims. Early in his political career, Emile Eddé was identified with French policies and was viewed as the most outspoken defender of French interests. Although he never hesitated to criticise and at times publicly denounce French policy,[67] his constant opposition to the idea of Arabism and his espousal of the notion of Lebanon's 'Phoenician origin' aroused Muslim hostility towards him.[68]

Moreover, upon assuming the premiership, Emile Eddé's sweeping reformist measures in the judiciary and government bureaucracy widened opposition against him in Parliament. But the greatest controversy centred on Eddé's decision to close several public schools on the basis that they were inefficient.[69] The measure backfired (these schools were attended mostly by Muslims), and drew a strong reaction from Muslim leaders who considered the government's measures to be directed against Muslim interests. These measures had repercussions outside Lebanon, in Palestine and Iraq, where officials accused Eddé of adopting policies targeted against

[67] Especially Eddé's clash with High Commissioner Sarrail. See 'Awad, op. cit, pp. 151–164.

[68] See Riashi, op. cit., pp. 66–70; Rabbath, op. cit., pp. 391–2.

[69] 111 public schools were closed out of a total of 162. Murad, op. cit., pp. 134–5. Eddé's sweeping reforms aggravated those who drew benefits from government favouritism. See Kiwan, op. cit., pp. 134–5. See also Browne, op. cit., pp. 115–138.

Lebanese Muslims.[70] Although Eddé's cabinet did not last long, he acquired a negative image in the eyes of many Muslims, strengthened later by his pro-French policies and open advocacy of a 'smaller' Greater Lebanon, where Christians would constitute a clear-cut majority.[71]

Contrary to Eddé, Khoury was more cautious, easygoing and, above all, a pragmatist in his approach to Lebanon's sectarian politics. Khoury, both by temperament and cultural exposure was more receptive and accommodating to ideas emanating from the Arab-Muslim side.[72] Having studied and perfected his knowledge of Arabic literature and culture, he developed a keen interest in literary writing. Khoury, moreover, was better tuned to the politics of the Mountain and had a better understanding of the subtleties of confessional politics than did Eddé. In other words, Khoury's field of political action was from the outset broader, more diverse, and more flexible than that of Eddé.

Another crucial difference between the two men stemmed from the politics of Beirut, the new capital of Greater Lebanon and the seat of the French High Commissioner. Both leaders had to establish a strong foothold in the city as a first step towards acquiring a credible presence in national politics. In many ways, Beirut's politics were a barometer of national unity because the city was an open meeting place for Lebanese politicians of all persuasions; because it was a demographically mixed city having both Christian and Muslim quarters reputed for their populist tendencies; and because it was a major meeting place for Lebanese leaders and French authorities. In addition, Beirut was the country's leading business, financial, and trade centre. In short, Beirut had all the necessary ingredients for political, economic, and demographic influence.[73]

[70] Murad, op. cit., pp. 207–8.

[71] Little has been written on that dimension of Eddé's favouring a smaller Greater Lebanon. That important dimension of mandatory politics has not been explored yet by using archival materials in Paris and London and elsewhere. See the short note by Meir Zamir, 'Emile Eddé and the Territorial Integrity of Lebanon', *Middle Eastern Studies* (May 1980), pp. 208–9.

[72] It is interesting to compare the profiles of Eddé and Khoury as described by the American Consul General in Beirut on the eve of the 1932 presidential elections. Khoury is described as 'pro-French, but politically neutral', while Eddé is described as 'quick, erratic, energetic . . . generally expected would be constitutional dictator if elected'. Browne, op. cit., p. 145.

[73] See Marwan Buheiry, *Beirut's Role in the Political Economy of the French Mandate*,

More importantly, it was in Beirut where Christian politicians, intellectuals, and businessmen interacted with their Muslim counterparts, particularly those who were still opposed to the inclusion of their city in a 'French-created' 1920 Lebanon. Ambitious politicians had to plead their case in the capital to make their voice heard by communal opponents as well as by leaders of other sectarian groups and, of course, by the French and their colonial rivals, the British. The ability of Khoury and Solh to walk the tightrope among these various poles of power paved the way for political co-operation in 1943.

Beirut, then, was the magnet for both Christian and Muslim politicians: for the Maronite leaders of the 'Mountain' and the Sunni leaders of the 'Coast.' Among the Maronite elite figured Eddé and Khoury, who sought to strengthen their ties with Beirut's business and intellectual community.

In the beginning, Eddé was better integrated in Beirut's Christian circles, particularly with the wealthy Greek Orthodox and Greek Catholic families of the city: his wife was from the Greek Orthodox Sursok family.[74] But before long, Khoury who, ironically, was perceived in Eddé's circles as a 'Mountain intruder'[75], entered Beirut's elitist Christian circles, but through a different door; his was that of the genuinely cosmopolitan, open-minded and pragmatic intellectual and business elite of the city. This unique exposure brought a moderating influence on Khoury's political outlook.[76]

Khoury's entourage included people drawn from diverse backgrounds: men of letters like Michel Chiha (who was, actually, Khoury's brother-in-law and a partner in a banking firm of the Greek Catholic

1919–1939 (Oxford: Centre for Lebanese Studies, n.d.). On Beirut's increasing political importance in the nineteenth century, see Leila Tarazi Fawaz, *Merchants and Migrants in Nineteenth Century Beirut* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1983). On the Mountain and City politics in Lebanon, see Albert Hourani's insightful essay, 'Ideologies of the Mountain and the City', in Roger Owen (ed.), *Essays on the Crisis in Lebanon* (London: Ithaca Press, 1976), pp. 33–41.

[74] Originally, before running in Mount Lebanon in 1943, Eddé's electoral 'district' was Beirut. After his death in the late 1940s, his son, Pierre, ran for parliamentary elections in the districts of Beirut and Baabda, while his elder son, Raymond, represented the Jubail district in Mount Lebanon.

[75] Riashi, op. cit., p. 64.

[76] On Chiha's political thought, see Jean Salem, *Introduction à la pensée politique de Michel Chiha* (Beirut: Librairie Samir, 1970).

millionnaire, Henri Pharaon), bankers like Henri Pharaon, and wealthy traders like the Kattaneh and Chouqair families. By contrast, Eddé's supporters consisted of the merchant aristocracy of Beirut's 'Sursok quarter' who were more interested in the social aspects of power than in its political content.

Later, lines were clearly drawn between the two camps. Soon after Eddé began to propagate his ideas in the French-language daily *l'Orient*, Khoury followed suit and established a daily of his own, *Le Jour*.[77] Paradoxically, Beirut had opposing effects on the political careers of the two Maronite leaders: a moderating influence on Khoury, the hardliner 'Mountain intruder', and a radicalising influence on Eddé, the cosmopolitan, urban francophile Maronite representative of the city.

That, however, was only one dimension of Beirut's politics. Two other dimensions were equally important: the French role and Sunni rivalries. As might be expected, the French relied heavily on Christian support to legitimise their presence in Lebanon.[78] But they also needed Muslim support, i.e., a large number of Sunni personalities willing to co-operate with them on an official basis. For that purpose, the French High Commissioner resorted to all available means to coopt as many as Muslim politicians as possible. While Shi'a leaders in the Beqa and the South needed little inducement to accept Greater Lebanon's independent status,[79] Sunni leaders, by the late 1920s, were divided into three

[77] Georges Naccache was the editor-in-chief of *l'Orient* and Michel Chiha was his counterpart in *Le Jour*. Both French-language newspapers were the most influential dailies during the Mandate. *L'Orient* first appeard in 1924 and its motto was 'the protection of Lebanon from Syrian unity'. *Le Jour* was born with the emergence of the Constitutional Bloc in 1934 and was funded at first by Sunni notable from Akkar, Muhammad al-'Abbud. In June 1971, the two newspapers merged and have since appeared as *L'Orient-le Jour*. See *An-Nahar*, 15 June 1971. It was Naccache who coined the phrase 'deux négations ne font pas une nation', in an editorial in *L'Orient* on March 10, 1949. See George Naccache, *Un rève libanais* (Beirut: Editions F.M.A., 1983).

[78] On French policy towards Lebanon up to the establishment of Greater Lebanon, see William I. Shorrock, *French Imperialism in the Middle East: The Failure of Policy in Syria and Lebanon, 1900–1914* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1976), pp. 3–22 and pp. 65–169; Jan Karl Tanenbaum, *France and the Arab Middle East, 1914–1920* (Philadelphia: The American Philosophical Society, 1978).

[79] In 1926 the Shi'a community earned 'official' recognition by the government authorities. Since then, Ja'afarite school of Jurisprudence had governed Shi'a religious affairs. See Pierre Rondot, *Les institutions politiques du Liban, des communautés*

factions: those advocating union with Syria, the moderate pan-Arabists, and few other politicians openly supporting the Lebanese state.[80]

France's divide-and-rule policy was effectively practiced with both Maronite and Sunni politicians. In fact, the High Commissioner had little difficulty practicing this policy since in each major Sunni city and within the Maronite community it was always possible to find politicians willing to challenge local rivals for either personal, family, or clan reasons. Contrary to the Eddé-Khoury bipolar rivalry which was institutionalised into two opposing parliamentary groupings by the mid-1930s (the Constitutional Bloc and later the National Bloc), Sunni rivalries could not be channelled into two camps since they hinged on both national (i.e. Arab) and local issues.

For example, among Tripoli's prominent families, Karamé was the most adamantly opposed to the 'separation' of Lebanon from Syria and was unwilling to co-operate with Christian leaders and the French. By contrast, Muhammad al-Jisr and later Khayr al-Din al-Ahdab, both based in Beirut but with no following in their native Tripoli, were more receptive to the idea of an independent Lebanon and thus more willing to work towards that goal.[81] In 1932, al-Jisr's candidacy to the presidency gained Maronite support but was strongly opposed by the French High Commissioner who suspended the Constitution.[82]

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traditionnelles à l'état moderne (Paris: Institut d'Etudes de l'Orient Contemporain, 1947), pp. 65–66; see also Rabbath, op. cit., pp. 115–120.

[80] Atiya, op. cit., pp. 131–133. According to Atiya, the Sunni community originally rejected Greater Lebanon on religious, legal, and emotional grounds. In a state which did not follow the Shari'a and ruled by Christians, 'Muslims were living in apostasy'; op. cit., pp. 66–67. As for the emotional dimension, it is associated with the crisis of identity of Sunni Muslims in 1920 Lebanon. In 1922, Sunni Muslims in coastal cities celebrated the military victories of Turkish leader Mustapha Kemal (Ataturk) who was neither Arab nor a practicing Sunni Muslim (he secularised Muslim Turkey). 'During the late 1930s', continues Atiya, identification with Egypt and King Faruq began, but Syria remained until the late 1940s the state with which the Muslims identified; . . . 'After 1952 [Nasser] assumed the role of the leading Muslim figure, and Egypt, to the exclusion of other Arab states, the role of the state with which a Lebanese Muslim identified himself', pp. 68–69.

[81] See Basim al-Jisr, op. cit., pp. 66–69; Rondot, op. cit., pp. 47–54.

[82] The episode of Muhammad al-Jisr's candidacy to the presidency was the source of embarrassment for the French. Faced with Maronite backing of al-Jisr by leading Maronite politicians like Emile Eddé, Yusuf al-Khazen and Michel Zakkour, High Commissioner Ponsot suspended the constitution to avert the possibility of electing a

Although Tripoli, economically affected by its inclusion in Greater Lebanon, set a record in its rejection of Greater Lebanon,[83] its leadership was brought to moderation by Beirut's Sunni elite. The latter began to look favourably to a policy of co-operation with the Christians but only after they began to lose faith in Damascus.

In Beirut, the Solh family with its significant reserve of competent political activists, took the lead in converting the 'negativists' to the idea of an independent Lebanon. The al-Solh approach was based less on patronage than on promoting an idea which appealed to most Muslim leaders but only when no other alternative was available: that of an independent Lebanon but within the framework of a loosely defined Arab nationalism.

The Solh family, coming originally from Sidon, was not an intruder to Beirut's Sunni elite. It came to Beirut with a broader Arab vision of Lebanese politics which contrasted with the rather provincial political outlook of local Beirut families such as the Salams, Bayhums, and Da'uks. Even prior to the emergence of Arab nationalism, some members of the Solh family acquired political influence under the Ottomans in their capacity as local representatives of the Sultan or as members of the Ottoman Parliament in Istanbul.[84]

Following the end of the first world war, Riad al-Solh became very active in the Arab nationalist movement. He earned wide respect among Syria's National Bloc leaders [85] and was one of the most

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Sunni president. This was in accordance with French policy, which was opposed to giving the highest executive post in the country to a non-Christian. On the reasons behind Maronite support for al-Jisr, see Salim, op. cit., pp. 79–86; see also al-Khoury, op. cit., pp. 176–177.

[83] Tripoli was by far the most 'Arab', 'Syrian' or 'Muslim' city in Greater Lebanon. Geographically, Tripoli is more the coastal line of the Syrian interior than that of Mount Lebanon. Politically, religiously, and economically Tripoli was perhaps the Sunni city most truly 'amputated' from its Arab and Muslim hinterland and joined to Greater Lebanon. For a general portrait of Tripoli, see John Gulick, *Tripoli: A Modern Arab City* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967).

[84] See Sami al-Solh, *Ahtakimu ila al-Tarikh* (Beirut: Dar al-Nahar Lilnashr, 1970), pp. 17–32; Riashi, op. cit., pp. 80–84. On the Solh family and other Sunni families in Beirut, see Michael Johnson, *Class and Client in Beirut: The Sunni Muslim Community and the Lebanese State, 1840–1985*, (London: Ithaca Press, 1986), pp. 45–81.

[85] Among National Bloc's associates (that is, different from members) were Riad al-Solh, Abdel-Rahman Bayhum and Abdel-Hamid Karamé. Solh was a financial contributor to Syria's National Bloc. Philip Khoury, Op. cit., p. 266 and p. 273.

charismatic and popular figures in Lebanon. He also had an appealing personality and a special talent in mobilising the 'street.' In short, his Arab credentials were unmatched among Lebanon's Sunni elite. An agreement with Christian leaders would gain legitimacy in Arab eyes only if someone of Solh's stature would be a party to it.[86]

Against this background, one could ask, why would Solh acquiesce to a local deal in Lebanon and forego the prospects of becoming one of the leading figures in the Arab nationalist movement? Why would he have to limit his political ambitions to a small country like Lebanon and be a partner in a contested confessional arrangement?

One way to answer these questions is to provide an assessment of the developments that occurred in the late 1930s, specifically after the fall of France to the German Army and the establishment of the Vichy government. As explained before, the French defeat gave the British greater room for manoeuvre. Following the Free French promise of independence in 1941 and an open Maronite call for independence, particularly by the Patriarch, the icy Maronite-Sunni relationship began to thaw.

As Khoury began to make public statements advocating a pro-Arab policy in 1937, and later met with Syrian and Egyptian leaders, Eddé drifted more strongly and more openly towards the French position. Khoury's reading of the situation was more accurate than that of Eddé who probably clung to the belief that the French would emerge victorious from the war. By contrast, Khoury must have sensed that the war would change the regional balance-of-power in Britain's favour—all the more so since Arab leaders in Syria and elsewhere were already in tacit alliance with the British.

Just as 'cheikh' Bechara was predisposed to take a new course of action, Riad 'bey's' attitude was equally favourable. With the French in retreat, and with Arab and British backing, they were now in a position to launch their 1943 initiative.

Like Khoury, Solh was a shrewd politician, well-acquainted with

[86] Other Sunni leaders such as Muhammad al-Jisr, Khayr al-Din al-Ahdab, Abdul-Hamid Karamé, Salim Salam, Salah Uthman Bayhum, Abbud Abdul-Razzak, or even any other member of the Solh family were either vulnerable politically to 'co-operate' with Maronite leaders or did not possess the political qualifications and background to play an effective leadership role similar to that of Riad al-Solh in brokering a controversial agreement like the National Pact.

Syria's Arab nationalist politics as well as with British-French rivarly in the Levant. He must have detected as early as the mid-1930s that the winds of change were blowing in a direction opposite to the aspirations of Lebanon's 'unionists' with whom he continued to identify until the early 1940s. Sensing these changes, Solh gradually revised his tactics and strategies. As early as 1934, Solh is reported to have told French High Commissioner de Martel that he was in favour of keeping Tripoli within Greater Lebanon, and in 1928 he is reported to have said: 'I prefer to be in a hut in an independent Lebanon rather than live in a colonized Arab empire'.[87]

Solh was the closest Lebanese Sunni leader to Syria's National Bloc. He must have been aware of the change of mood in Syria and the shifting priorities of National Bloc leaders. Indeed by the mid-1930s those leaders had become more interested in matters affecting Syria proper and Syrian-French relations than they were in the issue of integrating the attached territories of Greater Lebanon into Syria. Riad al-Solh's attempt to dissociate himself from the adamant position of the Sunni leaders as stated in the conference of 1936 was indicative of a change in his reading of the situation. Regardless of whether or not Kazem al-Solh's position had earned the backing of his cousin Riad, the latter made no effort to distance himself from the political controversy that Kazem al-Solh's statement had stirred.[88]

This is not to suggest that Khoury and Solh were reluctantly pushed into a deal in which they saw no merit for the country. On the contrary, both statesmen were committed to the agreement they reached regarding the course of action towards a newly-emerging Lebanese republic. In fact, Riad al-Solh was no passive actor in the process *vis-à-vis* Sunni negativists and Syrian leaders; nor was Bechara al-Khoury regarding the Christian 'negativists.' They both lobbied for the agreement.

According to one account, Solh was the leading Lebanese Sunni to advocate the notion of 'Lebanonising Muslims' in return for 'Arabising Christians.' In his meetings with Syrian leaders, Solh sought to get Syria's approval for relinquishing the 'four provinces' claimed by Damascus. He justified this move on the basis that with an independent

[87] Murad, op. cit., p. 225; Atiya, op. cit., p. 131.

[88] Munah and Takieddine al-Solh say that Riad al-Solh was not far from Kazem al-Solh's viewpoint. Murad, op. cit., pp. 157–161.

Lebanon, 'no harm would be made if the number of Arab states was six or seven,'[89] and that Arab interests would be better served, since an independent Lebanon would allay Christian fears and thus abort colonial attempts to exploit them. He also added that full Christian partnership in an Arab system of states would remove the solid Muslim colouring of Arabism. According to Khaled al-Azm, Solh tried to convince Syrian leaders to include the four provinces in Greater Lebanon by arguing that these provinces, inhabited by a Muslim majority, will preserve the confessional balance in the country and will therefore not give Christians a large majority.[90]

Similarly, Khoury had to appease and convince Christian nationalists of the utility and significance of his pro-Arab stance. Although his task was facilitated by the position of the Maronite Patriarch and the support of a broad-based Christian elite[91], he nonetheless was subjected to severe criticisms from Eddé and his supporters. Khoury had carefully to circumvent his opponents' criticisms while pushing for a Christian-Muslim national agreement acceptable by rejectionists on both sides.

To be sure, the Pact was not as spontaneous as it appears to have been. The groundwork was done prior to the Solh-Khoury agreement in the summer of 1943. A well-structured distribution of political offices along sectarian lines was devised, once again, with the assistance of outsiders. Confessional representation in Parliament was established at a multiple of eleven with a 6 to 5 ratio (6 Christians and 5 Muslims). It was on the basis of this formula that the National Pact took its final shape. In fact, this confessional arrangement in government office was the outcome of negotiations involving Lebanese and Egyptian leaders, as well as British General Spears and French General Catroux.[92]

[89] Al-Jisr, op. cit., p. 110.

[90] *Muzakarat Khalid al-'Azm* (Beirut: Al-dar al-Muttahida Lilnashr, 1972), (vol. 2), p. 12.

[91] Notably, the activities of Yusuf al-Sawda who formed 'the committee of the Lebanese National Pact' in 1938. The committee included several Christian and Muslim politicians and notables. The broad lines of the Committee's pact bears significant similarity to the 1943 National Pact. On the 1938 Pact, see Issam Khalifeh, 'Al-Mithaq al-Watani Laysa Sabab Karithatuna', *al-Minbar*, (May 1988), pp. 29–35.

[92] Although various accounts have been suggested to describe the process by which the arrangement was reached, what was certain was that Muslim objections began when President Ayoub Thabet (a Protestant originally from Mount Lebanon, appointed to the

Whether or not the Lebanese were truly committed to independence or to the Pact, with the election of Khoury to the presidency and the formation of a cabinet headed by Solh, it was somewhat too late to reverse the course of events. In fact, following the declaration of Lebanon's independence by General Catroux and the subsequent Bkirki national gathering in December 1941 which grouped representatives of all the communities, the process of change became increasingly irreversible.[93] By then, many Lebanese understood that the country had become independent and it was only a matter of a few years, that is, until the end of the war, that independence would be formalised. In that gathering, Patriarch 'Arida demanded in unequivocal terms the full and effective independence of Lebanon.[94]

As Edmond Rabbath rightly stated: 'C'était la première fois qu'au Liban la voix s'élevait bien haut, pour formuler, avec une telle netteté, la revendication suprême de l'indépendance. Et cette revendication c'était le Patriarche Maronite, porte parole des Chrétiens d'Orient, de ceux, à tout le moins, qu'unissaient la foi a Rome et l'attachement a la France, qui l'exprimait.'[95] The Patriarch's demands, presented in a programme of six points, were signed by several Christian and Muslim personalities.[96]

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presidency by Catroux for an interim period to oversee the elections in 1943) issued two decrees in which he put the number of deputies in the Parliament at 54 with 32 Christians and 22 Muslims. The emigrant population, which was predominantly Christian, was included in the general count. Muslim leaders strongly opposed this arrangement, and Thabet was removed from office by High Commissioner Helleu. He was replaced by Petro Trad, a Greek Orthodox lawyer from Beirut. Finally, a modified version was adopted by which the total number of deputies in Parliament would be 55 with 30 seats reserved the various Christian communities, and 25 for the two Muslim communities and the Druze (6 to 5 ratio preserved). General Spears and Egyptian leader Mustafa Nahhas Pasha, who acted as intermediaries between Lebanese politicians, were instrumental in bringing about the final agreement. On events surrounding this controversial arrangement, see Rabbath, op. cit., p. 452; Catroux, op. cit., pp. 335–7. See also Hassan Hallaq, *Al-Tayarat al-Siyasiya fi Lubnan,'1943–1952* (Beirut: Ma'had al-Inma' al-'Arabi, 1989), pp. 167–176. Salibi, op. cit., pp. 187–8; and al-Jisr, op. cit., pp. 93–95.

[93] See Rabbath, op. cit., pp. 432–446

[94] Ibid., pp. 446–447.

[95] Ibid., p. 447.

[96] In his statement, the Patriarch called, among other things, for 'the effective independence' of Lebanon in internal government as well as in foreign policy. The six-point programme was signed by a number of Christian and Muslim personalities,

The process of the National Pact was set in motion: Khoury's meetings with Egyptian and Syrian leaders in February 1942; direct British involvement; and Solh's openness to the idea of an independent pro-Arab Lebanon. Thus, with the termination of the mandate in November 1943, Lebanon gained its political independence and in 1946 the last divisions of French troops evacuated the country.

Solh's ministerial declaration on 7 October 1943 is considered to be the first verbal enunciation of the National Pact. It is in that speech that the celebrated phrase of Lebanon's 'Arab face' was stated.[97] In many speeches and declarations, President Khoury emphasised a similar theme of 'no East, no West,' while advocating a 'special relationship' with the Arab world.[98] The Khoury-Solh alliance became the cornerstone in the making of Lebanon's new confessional elite sharing a belief in the politics of the lowest common denominator of post-1943 Lebanon. It also inaugurated a new Maronite-Sunni state partnership.

Twisting The National Pact: Interpretations and Applications, 1943–1967

Given the internal and regional circumstances of the time, the National Pact was the 'best offer' that the Lebanese leaders were able to get. In other words, if Lebanon were to gain independence, no other option was available. Obviously, doubts and uncertainties remained. They are underlined by the following questions. If the creation of Greater Lebanon in 1920 was, for the Sunnis, the apex of their defeat, as Atiya put it,[99] would an Arab-oriented but independent Lebanon be considered a victory, or even a half-victory? And if so, was the termination of the French mandate and independence a victory for Christian national aspirations? Put differently, who saw victory or defeat in the

including Bechara al-Khoury, Khalid Chehab, Majid Arslan, 'Adel 'Usayran, Sabri Hamadeh, and Camille Chamoun. See al-Jisr, op. cit., pp. 86–87; Rabbath, op. cit., p. 447. For another (leftist) reading of the 1941 event, see Mass'ud Daher, op. cit., pp. 130–136.

[97] See text in al-Jisr, op. cit., pp. 485–495. On the constitutional amendments that terminated the Mandate and French reactions, see Rabbath, op. cit., pp. 458–469 and Hallaq, op. cit., pp. 105–129.

[98] See Bechara al-Khoury, *Majmu'at Khutab*, vol. IV op. cit.; see also al-Jisr, pp. 482–484.

[99] Atiya, op. cit., p. 60.

1943 deal? Was the Pact a compromise shared by a handful of pragmatic elite as opposed to an agreement that would meet the expectations of the masses?

That communal leaders were willing to reach a vague compromise was no guarantee of its acceptance by the people they theoretically represented. But that was not unique to Lebanon, for earlier in the century, the transition from Ottomanism to Arab nationalism was also the result of a process of intra-elite rivalries similar to that of Lebanon, in which the masses played a marginal role.[100]

In a way, Arab nationalism was based on a double negation formula not dissimilar to that of Lebanon's National Pact: 'no to the Ottoman, no to the French' in early Arab nationalist terminology was equivalent to the Pact's slogan of 'no east, no west.' But unlike Arab nationalism, the Pact's negation suffered an inherent confessional handicap. It was also devoid of the populist, ideological (and emotional) appeal that Arab nationalism enjoyed.

The National Pact was based on two faulty assumptions: an internal one based on the belief that elite consensus reflected grass-roots communal support; and an external one derived from the assumption that the balance-of-power in the region would remain unchanged in the sense that it will always reflect the value system of the first generation of conservative pro-Western Arab nationalists. Future events showed that these faulty assumptions were at the root of conflict in Lebanon, first in 1958 and later in the 1970s. Similar faulty assumptions were also at the root of conflict in pan-Arab politics.

Although a brief show of national unity was demonstrated in 1943, mainly in Beirut, involving the Kata'ib and Najjadah,[101] the bulk of

[100] See Philip S. Khoury, *Urban Notables and Arab Nationalism: The Politics of Damascus, 1860–1920*, (London: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

[101] The literature on the independence period has generally exaggerated and romantacised the brief unity by default between the two youth movements the (Maronite) Kata'eb and the (Sunni) Najjada. Neither Pierre Gemayel saw the French as 'colonial oppressors' nor did Adnan al-Hakim seek to show allegiance to the kind of independent Lebanon that Gemayel envisioned. It is more accurate to say that by 1943 the French had antagonised many Maronite leaders, while the Syrians had done their share by 'abandoning' Lebanese Sunni leaders by not supporting their claims to have their 'coastal areas' be part of Syria. Soon after the release of Lebanese leaders from detention, the Kata'eb and Najjada regained their original communal 'frontlines'. On the

the population remained untouched by the city's politics. Even a few months prior to the declaration of independence, campaigns in the parliamentary elections did not particularly focus on the issues which constituted the basis of the al-Solh-Khoury understanding. Rather, issues disputed among rival candidates mostly involved parochial concerns based on local clannish politics.

Individuals cast their votes to express loyalty and support to those leaders whom they expected to look after their local and communal interests. Except in Mount Lebanon, national or foreign policy issues were generally disregarded. In Christian eyes, elections centred around long-time rivals in the politics of Mount Lebanon. In Muslim eyes, those running for the elections were successful not so much because of their stand on Arab nationalism as because of their influence and legitimacy as local Zu'ama in their electoral districts. This was particularly true of the Shi'a and Druze communities. Shi'a leaders like Ahmad al-As'ad or Sabri Hamadeh or Druze leaders like Majid Arslan or Rashid Jumblatt were elected not because they identified with Syria's Arab nationalists but because they were well-established local leaders drawing support from a communal power base.

It was clearly known that in the 1943 elections the French supported Emile Eddé while the British backed Bechara al-Khoury. However, the ordinary voter was little concerned with British or French policy in the region. Only in Mount Lebanon did electoral campaigns reflect strong rivalries between the two strong Maronite presidential aspirants. Both Eddé and Khoury were engaged in some sort of political blackmailing but it is not certain that most people cast their vote for Eddé for fear that Khoury might 'Arabise' Lebanon or that those who voted for Khoury did so in support of his 'pro-Arab' policies. Moreover, both Eddé and Khoury relied on local notables in Mount Lebanon to gain support, particularly outside their home districts and among non-Maronite voters.[102]

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early years of the Kata'eb Party, see *Tarikh Hizb al-Kata'ib al-Lubnaniya, al-Jiz' al-Thani, (1941–1946)* (Beirut: Dar al-'Amal Lilnashr, 1981), pp. 130–131.

[102] For example, Druze followers of Amir Majid Arslan voted for Khoury because they were political allies, running on the same electoral list. As for other regions like the Beqa or the South, the Khoury-Eddé rivalry that marked Mount Lebanon communal politics had little bearing on the outcome of the elections. Sabri Hamadeh's followers in the Beqa and Ahmad al-Ass'ad's followers in the south were least involved in

After independence, reactions to regional developments that had a direct impact on the National Pact mirrored the genuine aspirations of the masses. The signing of the Alexandria Protocol in 1944, which brought about the formal establishment of the Arab League a year later, initially provoked a negative Christian reaction. This agreement was viewed by some Maronite leaders as a first step towards Arab unity and thus ran counter to Lebanese political sovereignty as embodied in the National Pact.[103] These suspicions were alleviated only after Arab representatives recognised that the the foreign policies of the six signatory countries need not be dictated by the Arab League.[104]

It is important to note that by joining the Arab League, Lebanon, like other member countries, acquired official Arab recognition of its independent status. In reality, the establishment of such a political body contributed to the legitimisation and consolidation of the separate political entities of its member countries, particularly those countries fearing absorption by covetous neighbours. The formation of a political body like the Arab League, which recognised the independent status of member countries, was a more attractive alternative to any other unionist scheme (e.g. the Hashemite's Greater Syria or Fertile Crescent schemes).[105]

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intra-Maronite and Sunni- Maronite political disputes either in Mount Lebanon or Beirut. Nonetheless, Eddé, whose political views were at odds with those of Riad al-Solh concerning Arab politics, had used his good offices to have Solh run on the same ticket with Ahmad al-Ass'ad (then the most powerful southern Shi'a leader) to help guarantee his election. The Solh family hailed from Sidon, but in the predominantly Shi'a southern Lebanon, al-Ass'ad was the leading *Za'im* and was able to draw the largest number of votes in the region. See Salim, op. cit., pp. 141–143; Atiya, op. cit., p. 172; Hallaq, op. cit., pp. 97–105.

[103] See, for example, the initial reaction of Yusuf al-Sawda in a critical commentary on Lebanon's stature in a 'union of Arab states', *al-Ta'awun al-Arabi wa Protocol al-Iskandariya* (Beirut, n.p., 1944).

[104] On the negotiations and the respective positions of some Lebanese leaders regarding the founding of the Arab League and its charter, see Hallaq, op. cit., pp. 322–257, Salim, op. cit., pp. 195–208; Rabbath, op. cit., pp. 474–476; al-Jisr, op. cit., pp. 166–172; al-Khoury, op. cit., pp. 105–110.

[105] The founding member countries of the Arab League were: Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, Saudi Arabia and Yemen. Britain took an active interest in the creation of the 'Arab League' and encouraged Egypt—even though it was then the least 'Arab' of all Arab countries—to play a leading role in the formation of the League. On the early

Additional challenges to Lebanese national unity stemmed from external sources. At first, there was the unsettled issue of the French military evacuation from Lebanon. That constituted another test to Christian willingness to uphold the Pact's 'neutral' foreign policy orientation. The Paris government's demand to sign a military treaty with Lebanon was consistently rebuffed by president Khoury, who made it clear that France would have no special privileges in an independent Lebanon. French interests would be no different from those of other countries having diplomatic relations with Lebanon. After two years of strenuous negotiations with French, British, and later American officials, an agreement was finally reached in March 1946 and the last French units evacuated Lebanese territory by the end of the year.[106]

Apart from periodic disagreements between Khoury and Solh, the two men formed the proper team of statesmen that Lebanon needed during the critical post-independence period of the 1940s. In times of crisis, Khoury was the moderate spokesman for 'Maronite' Lebanon in Arab and Muslim circles, while Solh was the most credible representative of the Lebanese 'Sunni' position in the Arab world. Neither Khoury nor Solh hesitated in confronting their respective critics (Emile Eddé and his supporters in the case of Khoury, and Sunni negativists and Sunni leaders in the case of Solh), and defend the independence of the 1943 Lebanese state within the framework of the National Pact. The harmonious division of labour between the two 'founding fathers'[107] was strengthened as the National Pact passed

activities of the Arab League, see Cecil A. Hourani, 'The Arab League in Perspective', *Middle East Journal*, 1 (April 1947), pp. 125–136.

[106] President Khoury faced Maronite opposition to his position towards the French not only from Eddé and his supporters but also from Patriarch 'Arida. Hallaq, op. cit., p. 143. On the events that culminated in the evacuation of French troops in 1946, see Rabbath, op. cit., pp. 477–510; Hallaq, op. cit., pp. 124–163; Gaunson, op. cit., pp. 145–181.

[107] Although Khoury co-operated with several Sunni Prime Ministers other than Riad al-Solh, no Sunni leader (including other members of the Solh family) could have been able to rescue Khoury from the 1951 crisis that led to his resignation other than Riad al-Solh. It is important to note that Solh was instrumental in bringing about the re-election of Khoury in 1949 for a second time. Salim, op. cit., pp. 317–318. Following Solh's assassination, Khoury was deprived of his most effective Sunni partner, though at the time of Solh's death the two leaders were not on good terms.

yet another test in 1950. That was Riad al-Solh's support for the dissolution of the Syrian-Lebanese 'Conseil des Intérêts Communs' established six years earlier.[108] Just as it was the President's successful handling of the earlier crisis which had led to the termination of French military presence, it was Solh's firm stand against the Syrian government, particularly Khalid al-Azm and other pro-Syrian Lebanese Sunni notables, that brought about the economic separation from Syria in 1950.[109] By 1950, the two countries were well on their way towards the adoption of two radically divergent paths to their respective economic development.

Notwithstanding the relatively smooth handling of the Pact's early externally-generated problems, internal voices of dissent were still heard, such as Abdul-Hamid Karamé, who continued to maintain the most negativist attitude among Sunni politicians. As late as 1952, some Sunni leaders continued to advocate economic unity with Syria.[110] Even Riad al-Solh did not hesitate to state in 1949 'his willingness to revoke the National Pact if the other party (i.e., the Christians) so desired.'[111] In a way, the 'Syrian option' continued to be on the mind of those Sunni leaders who were disenchanted with the state of affairs in post-1943 Lebanon. That was to resurface, in different form and under different circumstances, in the crisis of 1958.

After all, it was partly Syria's 'desertion' of the Sunni Lebanese leaders with its acceptance of the 1936 French-Syrian treaty that left

[108] See al-'Azm, op. cit., pp. 5–87; Hallaq, op. cit., pp. 302–308. Al-Solh and al-'Azm frequently criticised one another in public and in the press.

[109] The Husni al-Za'im coup in Syria led to the removal of the traditional political elite with whom men like Riad al-Solh identified not only politically and ideologically but also socially and culturally. Solh's wife was from the prominent Syrian al-Jabiri family. After 1949, Solh's relations with Syria's military leaders deteriorated. Syria's sponsoring of SSNP activities against Lebanese authorities—though al-Za'im handed SSNP leader, Antun Saadeh, over to Lebanese authorities after having promised him support—was a case in point. Solh was assassinated by three members of the SSNP in Amman. For details on Saadeh's arrest, execution and Solh's assassination, see Hallaq, op. cit., pp. 262–281, pp. 576–590. See also Hisham Sharabi, *Al-Jamr wal Ramad* (Beirut: Dar al-Tali , 1978), pp. 221–238; Rabbath, op. cit., p. 533. On the military coups in Syria, and their impact on Lebanese-Syrian relations, see Hallaq, op. cit., pp. 287–310.

[110] See Atiya, op. cit., p. 217.

[111] Solh's statement in Parliament was in response to Camille Chamoun's accusations of his government policies. Cited in Atiya, op. cit., p. 224 (in footnote) and in Hallaq, op. cit., pp. 286–287. Both citations are taken from official parliamentary proceedings.

little choice to leaders like Abdul-Hamid Karamé, Salim Salam and others but to acquiesce to an independent Lebanon.[112] Consequently, when Syria seemed willing to reclaim Lebanon, it was likely to find a positive response among some Sunni leaders.

Parallel to Sunni demands for Arab and/or Syrian unity were Maronite calls for a moderate Arab policy or even an autonomous pre-1920 political entity insulated from 'Arab-Muslim' dominance. But these were demands provoked in part by intra-elite rivalries and had no significant impact on the people. Apart from Emile Eddé's pro-French policies, the most notable figure, whose activities and pronouncements provoked great controversy, was the Maronite Bishop of Beirut, Ignatius Mubarak. One of the early critics of the French and an outspoken propagator of the idea of a Christian national home in Lebanon, Mubarak's actions were the subject of heated controversy. In 1947, he went as far as to stage a 'revolt' against the government, but was denounced by major Maronite leaders as well as by the Patriarch.[113] More destabilising to the process of national consolidation were events stemming from regional developments over which Lebanon had no control. Changes in the regional balance-of-power had drastic consequences on the Muslim 'street', which, in turn, helped shape the future interpretations and implementation of the National Pact.

While Lebanon's participation in the first Arab-Israeli war in 1948 (acclaimed by most Lebanese leaders) served as another demonstration of national unity, subsequent regional events provoked deep rifts in public opinion. These events, beginning with the launching of regional defence pacts, forced the government to resort to policies which increased sectarian polarisation. While early Western-sponsored defence pacts (which included the Arab countries and Israel) were rejected by the Lebanese government,[114] subsequent regional alliances

[112] In 1973 Abdul-Hamid Karamé is quoted by Rondot, as saying: 'nos frères de Damas nous ayant abandonnés, explique-t-il aux journalistes, il est de notre devoir de réclamer nos droits au Liban'. Rondot, op. cit., p. 52.

[113] On Bishop Mubarak's open criticism of French authorities in 1933, after the suspension of the Constitution, see Rabbath, op. cit., p. 398; Longrigg, op. cit., p. 204.

[114] Khoury's refusal to include Lebanon in regional pacts—mostly British-sponsored Arab unitary schemes in the second half of the 1940s and early 1950s—eroded the tacit British backing he had enjoyed. In 1952, the British did clearly support Chamoun for the

provoked the indignation of a new generation of radicalised Arab elite. This generation of young Arab officers opposed Western-sponsored alliances and later, under Nasser's leadership, sought to steer a middle course between East and West. Not surprisingly, then, a defence agreement such as the Baghdad Pact in 1955 was bound to deepen divisions within the Arab world. By the mid-1950s, Arab regimes were divided into two camps: the Iraqi-led pro-Western camp and the Nasser-led 'anti-imperialist' camp. Predictably, these divisions were reflected in Lebanese politics. President Chamoun's pro-Western policy was opposed by most Lebanese Muslims as well as by some influential Christian leaders.

But before analysing the long-term consequences of post-Nasser inter-Arab politics on the interpretations of the National Pact, it should be noted that internal Lebanese politics were not polarised with every shift in the regional balance-of-power. In fact, prior to the 1956 Suez war and the rapid ascendancy of Nasser, regional disturbances such as the 1948 war and Syria's successive military takeovers beginning in 1949 had few destabilising effects on Lebanon's domestic politics.

Although this was partly due to Solh's cautious attitude towards Syria's military regimes, those officers who took power in Damascus did not instantly become credible Arab nationalists in the eyes of Lebanon's Sunni leadership. Moreover, there was no time to build lasting relationships between Syria's new dictators and Lebanese Sunni leaders since the former's rule was short-lived and domestically insecure to allow it to look beyond Syria's borders.[115]

By contrast, Nasser's appearance on the Arab scene provoked tremors among both the elite and the masses. Never before did an Arab leader embody all the symbols and images of Arab leadership. Nasser's populist style, charismatic appeal, and bombastic rhetoric, in addition

presidency and were not displeased with Khoury's resignation. On Lebanon and regional events, see Hallaq, op. cit., pp. 313–375, 523–552.

[115] Syria's influence in Lebanon in the early 1950s was limited. Damascus exerted influence on some Muslim leaders. In the 1952 presidential elections, Damascus opted for Camille Chamoun rather than for his rival Hamid Frangiyeh who had greater support in Parliament. Chamoun was favoured because, at the time, he was considered more pro-Arab than Frangiyeh but more importantly, because he was backed by the British. See Salem, op. cit., pp. 355–359.

to the boost he gained after his 'victory' against 'Western imperialism' in the 1956 Suez war, made him the Arab world's most popular leader.

Because of this new irresistible force in Arab politics, the Muslim 'street' in Lebanon was bound to rise in full support of Nasser's policies regardless of the degree to which President Chamoun's policies tilted towards the pro-Western Arab camp, and regardless of what the National Pact came to mean. Undoubtedly, had Chamoun opted for a less defiant posture towards Nasser, and had he enjoyed greater support from the Lebanese leaders, Christians and Muslims alike, (amongst whom were the many losers of the 1957 parliamentary elections), he would have weathered the 1958 storm more successfully.[116]

But Chamoun who had re-election ambitions, had many enemies in the country particularly amongst those who had lost their seats in the 1957 elections in which Chamoun had a hand in the defeat of a number of major *Zu'amah*. He also had to deal with an unprecedented phenomenon in Arab politics. Nasserism was unbeatable in Lebanon. There was little Chamoun could do to prevent the mobilising of the Muslim 'street' throughout the country, just as there was little any Arab leader could do to stem the mounting wave of Nasserism in other Arab countries.[117] Prior to the setbacks, first in Yemen and later in the 1967 war, no Arab leader was in a position to withstand Nasser's power, certainly not a Maronite President in a divided country like Lebanon, and certainly not with a gentleman's agreement like the National Pact.[118]

[116] On the 1958 crisis, see Fahim I. Qubain, *Crisis in Lebanon* (Washington, D.C.: The Middle East Institute, 1961). See also Irene L. Gendzier, 'The Declassified Lebanon, 1948–1958: Elements of Continuity and Contrast in US Policy Toward Lebanon', in Halim Barakat (ed.) *Toward a Viable Lebanon* (London: Croom Helm, 1988) pp. 187–210; Kamal Salibi, 'The Lebanese Crisis in Perspective', *The World Today* (September 1958), pp. 369–380.

[117] See, for example, Patrick Seale's account of Syrian politics in the 1950s at the height of Nasserism, *The Struggle for Syria. A Study of Post-War Arab Politics, 1945–1958* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965).

[118] Since the mid-1950s, the Muslim 'street' showed allegiance to Nasser. Before long, Sunni leaders like Salam, Karamé, Yafi, and 'Uwayni began to pay visits to Cairo. Whether convinced of this course of action or driven by the masses, Sunni leaders depended on Cairo for leadership and guidance regardless of the degree to which

Two alternatives were available to President Chamoun: one was a pro-Western policy in line with that of the Iraqi-Jordanian-Saudi axis; the other was Nasser's anti-Western and Arab unionist policies, which stipulated that Lebanon join the Nasser-led United Arab Republic. In 1958, the union was proclaimed between Egypt and Damascus, only to falter three years later.

While in the mid-1950s, Chamoun tried to steer a middle course between the two camps by assuming the role of a mediator between rival Arab states, he was denounced by Sunni leaders who began to advocate a pro-Nasser policy as early as 1954. President Chamoun identified with the Western-backed Arab camp, then led by Iraq's Nuri al-Sa'id, but without disengaging Lebanon from Arab politics, as outlined in the National Pact. In retrospect, it turned out that Chamoun miscalculated by siding with the losing party, that is, with those Arab leaders who were discredited in the eyes of Arab nationalists and were identified with 'Western imperialism'. The controversy hinged on which 'Arab face' Lebanon was to follow.

Such a pro-Western policy was no different in its broad lines from the one that Khoury and Solh adopted in the 1940s, when they co-operated and dealt openly with the British and, above all, with the first generation of Arab nationalists which included leaders like Nuri al-Sa'id and other Syrian Arab nationalists. Even Chamoun was known then to have been the outspoken defender of Arab rights when he pleaded the Palestinian cause before the United Nations and in Western capitals.[119]

But by the mid-1950s, Chamoun's, al-Sa'id's, and Riad al-Solh's Arabism (had the latter stayed alive) had become a form of betrayal compared to the Arabism of men like Nasser and Syria's military rulers. As Kamal Salibi put it: 'the old political order in Lebanon, which was understood and appreciated by the statesmen of king Farouk's Egypt and of Quwatli's Syria, had gone completely out of step with the changing pattern of Middle Eastern politics. It was

Chamoun identified with pro-western or anti-Nasser policies. Had Chamoun sided with Nasser, Lebanon's Sunni leaders would have been no less adamant in their support of Nasser. On the spontaneous Sunni embrace of Nasser's political line, see Atiya, op. cit., pp. 242–296.

[119] See Camille Chamoun, *Marahil al-Istiqlal: Lubnan wa Duwal al-'Arab fil Mu'tamarat al-Dawliya* (Beirut: n.p., 1957).

hopeless to expect a Nasser to understand a Sami al-Solh, or a Sarraj to understand a Chamoun.' [120]

Under Nasser's leadership, Arab national interests were no longer compatible with any kind of pro-Western orientation in Middle Eastern politics. Nor was the Arab political elite an homogeneous conservative group sharing a similar political background and exposure to the West. Equally important, the pan-Arab audience of the 1950s was different from that of the earlier period. It differed in social, cultural, and ideological backgrounds, and came to identify Arabism with the bloc of Non-Aligned countries and Third World revolutionary movements aimed at ridding the 'Arab nation' of the remnants of Western colonalism.

Arab public opinion was highly receptive to Nasser's nationalist rhetoric. Not only did his speeches mobilise the people, they also opened new 'battlefronts' within rival political parties in each Arab country as well as among Arab regimes. Lebanon, undoubtedly, was no exception. And if Nasser had to defeat strong adversaries who enjoyed significant legitimacy and power in some Arab countries (e.g., in Jordan and Saudi Arabia), in Lebanon he had virtually no opponents among the Muslim political establishment. It was too big a challenge, for no Muslim leader in Lebanon enjoyed the kind of legitimacy and political security to withstand Nasser while preserving local support and the backing of the community's political and religious establishments.

Almost all major Sunni leaders showed allegiance to Nasser. Were it not for Sami al-Solh's willingness and courage to serve as Prime Minister during the most difficult days of the 1958 crisis, despite attacks from the Sunni political establishment, events would have certainly taken a different course, and probably the crisis might not have ended in the same way that it did. Sami al-Solh's position was politically costly, and the 'Solh syndrome,' that is, the boycott which he faced from the Sunni political establishment, became a constant concern on the minds of all Sunni leaders who have assumed the premiership since 1958.[121]

[120] Kamal Salibi, 'Lebanon Since the Crisis of 1958', *The World Today* (January 1961), p. 42.

[121] See Prime Minister Hoss' reply to President Sarkis when Hoss refused to sign a

Since the second half of the 1950s the Arab political scene has been subjected to radical transformation and, as a result, it became impossible to insulate Lebanon from the destablising effects of these changes. Even by assuming that the Christian political establishment would have been willing to go along with any new pan-Arab populist trend, the question then became: how to draw the line between commitment to unrestrained populism and a necessary minimum degree of state sovereignty? What would be the outcome of such a deal? Unity with an unstable Syria—itself unable to agree on a nationalist option—or erratic unions which left the Arab world more fragmented than at any other time before the union fever began? And were the Lebanese to become Nasserist or Ba'athist, or to espouse any other variant of Arabism, the National Pact would be put in question and would perhaps be revoked.

These questions illustrate the problematic nature of the National Pact insofar as it defines Lebanon's pro-Arab foreign policy orientation in relation to changes in inter-Arab politics as well as in relation to the foreign policy of a dominant Arab regime. In the absence of a credible and effective Sunni leadership willing to subscribe to a moderate version of Lebanon's Arabism, the National Pact would always be put to the test.

For example, the 1948 Arab-Israeli war did not generate a domestic crisis because there was an Arab consensus regarding the war and against the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine. Therefore, the Lebanese government did not have to grapple with the problem of opting for a policy in line with one Arab regime or another; it thus joined the war against Israel and drew unanimous Christian and Muslim support for its decision.[122] But, when regional changes involved shifting alliances within the Arab world, the National Pact's external dimension became a source of controversy and conflict.

While regional developments kept the overall Christian interpretation of the Pact's Arab dimension unchanged, they divided Lebanese

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decree to terminate the service of Lebanese Army officers who rebelled against the army command in 1976, fearing that he would be another 'Sami al-Solh'. Karim Pakradouni, *La paix manqueé. Le mandat d'Elias Sarkis (1978–1982)*, (Beirut: Editions F.M.A., 1984), p. 109.

[122] See Nasri A. Diab, '1948: Le Liban et la première guerre Israelo-Arabe', *Lebanese National Defense* (May 1990), pp. 160–174.

Muslims, thereby reflecting the ideological fragmentations in the Arab world. In the early 1950s, the Sunni elite, led by Riad al-Solh, supported Lebanon's economic separation from Syria in part because Syria, beset by successive military coups, was no longer a model for moderate Arab nationalists to emulate. But with the assassination of Solh in 1951 and the emergence of Nasser in the midst of an increasingly radicalised Arab world, it became all the more difficult to insulate Lebanon from destabilising regional politics.

The Sunni role in Lebanon's Arab politics was weakened not only because there were no Sunni leaders of Riad al-Solh's caliber, but also because the new generation of Sunni leaders like Saeb Salam and Rachid Karamé (sons of prominent Sunni leaders of the 1930s and 1940s) saw in Nasserism a valuable opportunity to prove their pan-Arab credentials and assert their local *Za'amah*.[123] The young Salam and Karamé (the two major Sunni leaders who led the uprising in 1958) were relatively inexperienced and politically insecure. They were both unable and unwilling to keep the Nasserite appeal within tolerable limits. This reflected a deeper problem: that of the Sunni predicament in post-1943 Lebanon which failed to produce Sunni leaders capable of competing with those Arab leaders who came to mobilise the 'street' in Lebanon.

This brings us to the question of the National Pact's inherently unstable external setting and the assumptions held by the various elites of the independence era. In comparative perspective, the agreement reached in 1943 amongst the Lebanese leaders was based on the belief that the balance-of-power in the region would not undergo rapid (in less than a decade) and drastic transformations, certainly not in a way which ran counter to the very concept of consensual politics on which Lebanon's confessional politics are based.

In broad terms, it was assumed that while hostilities between Arabs and Zionists in Palestine would increase, the Arab world would be divided into two or three camps (e.g., Egypt vs. the Hashemites vs. Syria), but all sharing a moderate pro-Western political outlook. What happened in the 1950s was just the opposite of what it was hoped and probably believed would take place in the next decade. First, the

[123] See Arnold Hottinger, 'Zu'ama' and Parties in the Lebanese Crisis of 1958', *Middle East Journal* (Spring 1961), pp. 127–140.

Palestine war shattered Arab unity and self-confidence. It led to the radicalisation of some segments of Arab society and permanently altered the postwar military and political balance in the region. Second, Arab rivalries since the late 1950s have become destabilising not only to the rulers, but also to state constructs. Syria's and Iraq's swing between Nasserism, Syrian nationalism, and Ba'athism illustrates this pattern of instability and confusion. Although these divisions were reflected on the Lebanese political scene, they remained containable, mainly because Lebanon after 1958 pursued a foreign policy in line with Nasser, then the leading interpreter of Arab nationalism.

Another qualitative difference distinguishing the post-Nasser era from the 1940s stems from the changing structure of the ruling elite in the Arab world. As the earlier generation of 'Arab nationalists' and monarchists was replaced by a more militant generation, Lebanon clung to the old class of notables and to their chosen heirs. This placed Lebanon in the category of 'reactionary' orders as opposed to the 'progressive' Arab order. Ironically, Lebanon's Sunni leaders sided with those Arab leaders who revolted against the very political class to which Lebanese Sunni politicians belonged. Leaders of Egypt's Wafd party, for example, against whom Nasser revolted, shared a similar background with Lebanon's Sunni notables.

A fourth distinction pertinent to the 1960s and 1970s as opposed to earlier periods relates to the degree of polarisation and fragmentation that marked the Arab world. In addition to established rivalries, including Nasserism, Ba'athism and to a lesser extent Communism, the Palestinian revolutionary movement accelerated ideological divisions in Arab politics. Beirut's ideological jungle in the 1970s mirrored this chaos. The National Pact had neither the institutional capabilities nor the ideological flexibility to handle this high fertility rate in Arab ideological politics (discussed later).

Sinking the National Pact: 1968–1976

Differing communal priorities gave rise to various interpetations of the National Pact. Issues of reform, state-building, and pro-Arab foreign policy which have marked political life since 1943 were overshadowed in the 1970s by the question of Lebanon's commitment to the Palestinian cause and by demands of radical transformation in the

country's political system.[124] As a result, Lebanon's 'Arab face' in the 1970s meant unconditional support for the PLO's violation of all the agreements signed with the Lebanese government.

Just as communal priorities changed over time, so have the assumptions and conditions which gave rise to the 1943 Pact. By 1975 there was little room for a swap between Christians and Muslims regarding the external dimension of the Pact. The 1969 Cairo Agreement and the 1973 Melkart Accord, signed between the Lebanese government and the PLO, following two ministerial crises, exhausted Christian tolerance of Palestinian excesses. Muslim leaders, supported by a militant left and by a powerful PLO, ended up undermining the National Pact. Now, Riad al-Solh's 'Arab face' compromise was dropped in favour of an open commitment to a notion of Arabism more ambiguous than ever before. Ironically, Muslim and leftist maximalism exceeded that of the most radical Arab regimes.[125]

That was congruent with the post-1967 interpretation of Lebanon's 'Arab face'. Clearly, this was a radical departure from either the 1943 or the 1958 interpretations. In fact, Palestinian armed activities against Israel and other 'Arab enemies of the revolution' implanted the Palestinian problem with all its Arab, Israeli, and global ramifications into Lebanese confessional politics. Since the signing of the Cairo Agreement in 1969, no viable agreement either amongst the Lebanese communities or between the Lebanese government and some Arab regimes was possible without Palestinian blessing.

Given this state of affairs, one can conclude that not only did the Cairo Agreement exceed the most possible and acceptable Lebanese pro-Arab policy—even when measured by the standards of 1943 and 1958 combined—it made a non-Lebanese party, this time a people in

[124] On Palestinian militarism in Lebanon since the late 1960s and the 1975–76 war, see Kamal S. Salibi, *Crossroads to Civil War: Lebanon 1985–1976* (Delmar: Caravan Books, 1976); Walid Khalidi, *Conflict and Violence in Lebanon* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979); Marius Deeb, *The Lebanese Civil War* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1980). See also Farid el-Khazen, 'The Disintegration of the Lebanese Confessional System', Ph.D. dissertation, The Johns Hopkins University, 1987.

[125] See, for example, the proceedings of meetings chaired by Sunni Mufti Khalid in Dar al-Fatwa in Hassan Khalid, *al-Muslimun fi Lubnan wal Harb al-Ahliya. Mahadir Ijtima'at Qummat Aramoun Athna' al-Harb al-Ahliya* (Beirut: Dar al-Kindi, 1978), pp. 87–91, 122–135, 176–183.

revolution, an integral partner in the 1943 Pact. The PLO was given a legal claim buttressed by support from several Arab regimes to meddle in Lebanese politics and to undermine Lebanon's internal stability and position in the Arab state system.

Under these circumstances, and in the absence of a credible third party to mediate an agreement in line with that of 1943 or settle the conflict in ways similar to that of 1958, politics in the mid-1970s were dictated by the power of the gun. In the end, a 'stabilising' force was bound to emerge. That was Syria, another champion of Arabism, though in disagreement with the PLO not only over the strategy for the liberation of Palestine but also over Arabism. Obviously, Syria had its own agenda in Lebanon which was contradictory to Lebanese and Palestinian interests. With the full-scale Syrian military intervention in Lebanon in 1976, the National Pact—or whatever was left of it—entered a new phase in its tumultuous Arab journey, now under the control of an Arab state which has always harboured expansionist designs over Lebanon in the name of Arabism and a 'common Arab destiny.'

Of all the Arab countries, Lebanon was the only one in which its Muslim leaders openly advocated Palestinian military activities against Israel from Lebanese territory. Had Muslim demands not been wedded to Palestinian militarism, it would have been possible to reconcile differences in the 1970s.[126] On the eve of the 1975 war, Christian acceptance of Arabism was by far greater than at any other time in the past. Even the Kata'ib party, which symbolised Christian 'isolationism' *vis-à-vis* Arab issues, and which had since 1973 inaugurated an active pro-Arab policy, by 1975, had reached an unprecedented level in its identification with Arab causes.[127] Obviously, internal and, above all external factors, shaping public opinion on both sides prevented a convergence of communal perceptions and demands. Those internal and external mechanisms which had led to the making of the 1943 National Pact were no longer present in the 1970s: maximum Christian

[126] Ibid.

[127] The Kata'eb opening to Syria's Baath party and the exchange of visits between officials of both parties began in 1973. The chief architect of this new Kata'eb policy was Karim Pakradouni, then member of the party's political bureau. See Karim Pakradouni, *La'nat al-Watan, Min Harb Lubnan Ila Harb al-Khalij* (Beirut: 'Abr al-Sharq Lilmanshurat, 1991), pp. 139–149.

adjustment was not commensurate with minimum Muslim demands. If initial Christian rejection of the French mandate and acceptance of a pro-Arab Lebanon was made in return for Arab recognition of an independent Lebanon, how, then, could the balance be redressed at a time when Christians had reached the upper limit in their commitment to Arabism? Muslim and particularly Sunni unconditional support for the PLO in the 1970s made it impossible to dissociate internal reforms from unchecked Palestinian militarism. It thus emptied the National Pact of its original content.

Perhaps this is what the battle was all about: a total negation of the 1943 communal agreement. But one wonders to what extent the Lebanese Muslims saw a dichotomy between Lebanese sovereignty and the imperatives of Arabism? Developments in the 1970s demonstrated that the distinction was blurred, for Sunni acquiescence to the initial 1943 formula seemed tactical in nature, at least in times of crisis, and only a first step towards Lebanon's complete conversion to the Arab nationalism of the 1970s.[128] That was not far from what Kazem and Riad al-Solh implied in the 1930s and 1940s though of course under different internal and regional circumstances and, above all, under a completely different variant of Arab nationalism.

In addition to qualitative and quantitative changes in both Lebanese and Arab politics, in the 1970s a new communal dimension was added to the bargaining table: the political self-assertion of the Shi'a community. While other communities debated the political dimensions of the National Pact, the Shi'a community argued for the missing social contract in the 1943 arrangement. In reality, however, Shi'a demands were social in style but political in substance. Although the Shi'a community was an initial partner in the Pact, it played only a supportive role to Maronite-Sunni politics.

This is partly because traditional Shi'a leaders were not willing to press for the improvement of Shi'a communal conditions and partly because the community itself lagged behind other communities in terms of its political consciousness, social organisation,

[128] See Khalid, op. cit., pp. 221 –227, 224–250, 262–290. Proceedings of meetings held in Dar al-Fatwa attended by Sunni leaders (Salam, Karamé, the Mufti and others), Imam al-Sadr, Kamal Jumblatt as well as then Syrian Foreign Minister Abdul-Halim Khaddam, Yasir Arafat, and Libyan Prime Minister Abdul-Salam Jalloud. Also see Hussein al-Quwatly, 'al-Islam wa al-Hukm', *al-Safir*, August 18,1975.

economic base and, above all, in terms of its external connections.

In the 1970s, Shi'a communal concerns were powerfully articulated by Imam al-Sadr.[129] He saw a rightful claim to the system at all political, social, and economic levels. But the debate was not merely over rightful Shi'a grievances. Rather, it concerned the ways by which these grievances could be redressed, particularly at the political level: By what mechanism would it be possible to redress the balance-of-power and co-opt a mobilised Shi'a community into the system? How can Shi'a demands be situated in relation to the demands of other communities? Is there room for orderley, gradual change through the electoral process which would give the Shi'a a more representative leadership?

While these possibilities presupposed a long process of communal adjustment and a climate of political stability free of external intervention, one thing was certain in the 1970s: that the state was no longer capable of rendering justice to any community in the country, for the state itself was unable to ensure its own survival.

Because of Lebanon's sectarian heterogeneity, the National Pact's communal representation is more of an act of explicit recognition of the historical and communal constituents of Lebanese society than an accurate reflection of its demographic structure. For example, in Mount Lebanon's politics, the Maronites emerged at the turn of the century as the leading community, and later after the first world war, they were the outspoken defenders of Christian interests in an emerging new regional order.

The role of the Druze community in communal politics continued to decline during the *Imarah* especially under the Shihabis. In Greater Lebanon, the Druze community was no longer a major political force in the country. The decline in Druze power was not merely due to the shrinking size of the community. Rather, Druze influence receded at a time when the Maronite community was undergoing a long-term political, social, and economic transformation, which began roughly three centuries prior to the establishment of the modern Lebanese state in 1920.[130]

[129] See Fouad Ajami, *The Vanished Imam: Musa al-Sadr and the Shia of Lebanon* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980); Augustus Richard Norton, *Amal and the Shi'a, Struggle for the Soul of Lebanon* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1987).

[130] See Iliya F. Harik, *Politics and Change in a Traditional Society: Lebanon, 1711-1845* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968). See also Nasser Gemayel, *Les*

As the Maronite community acquired power in the Mountain, the Druze community remained static in its social organisation, political and geographic differentation as well as economic power base. The Maronite-advocated state in 1920 and the Maronite leading role in post-1943 Lebanese politics could then be seen as the culmination of Maronite communal ascendancy throughout the centuries. In many ways, an enlarged Lebanon in 1920 fulfilled the aspirations of an expanding Maronite community, which had acquired a distinct communal identity centuries prior to the establishment of the Lebanese state.

Similarly, since 1920 the Sunni role symbolised Lebanon's admission to Arab political circles. The Sunni community's partnership in the state and the National Pact gave Christian Lebanon the stamp of Arab and Muslim legitimacy. At that time, it was Sunni leaders who needed to be converted to the Christian 'cause' of independent Lebanon rather than the Shi'a or the Druze. Therefore, the Sunni community became the *de facto* rival/partner of the Maronite community in any 'national' agreement in Greater Lebanon. The dominant Sunni role during the mandate and after independence was less a reflection of the numerical size of the community than an explicit recognition of their Arabism which was better articulated than that of the Shi'a or the Druze.

To be sure, a Shi'a or Druze leader could not have negotiated or brokered the 1943 National Pact because these two communities and their leaders were not involved in the Arab nationalist movement and had not formulated a communal platform of their own either against Arab unity or in favour of Lebanese independence or perhaps in favour of a third option. And unlike the Sunni and Maronite communities, the Druze and Shi'a inhabitants of Mount Lebanon, the South or the Beqa were largely removed from Beirut politics and were little affected by the urban, pan-Arab nationalist political discourse of the period following the first world war.

The political careers of two well-known figures in the Arab nationalist movement in the 1920s, Druze leader Shakib Arslan and Shi'a notable Ali Haydar, active in the Arab nationalist movement and supporters of the Hashemites, indicate how far removed they were in

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échanges culturels entre les Maronites et l'Europe, du collège maronite de Rome (1584) au collège de 'Ayn-Warqa (1789), Vol. I,II (Beirut: l'Imprimerie Y and Ph. Gemayel, 1984).

the political outlook from that of the leadership of their communities.

While it is true that Arslan was a member of a lordly Druze family and thus a 'natural' candidate for the leadership of the Yazbaki faction of the Druze community (the rival faction to the Jumblati clan) his Arab and, more accurately, Islamic nationalism, remained a matter of personal ideological belief than a political platform to advocate among the Druze.[131] His influence as a political activist and a prolific writer was by far greater among non-Druze than among the Druze communities of Syria and Lebanon. Of greater significance was the fact that Arslan was a convert to Sunni Islam and an advocate of Arab/Muslim unity like many other Sunni Arab nationalist.

Not unlike Arslan, Ali Haydar was an Arab nationalist partly by conviction and partly by virtue of his friendship with King Faysal.[132] Being the scion of a prominent Ba'albak Shi'a family, he was in a position to command a large tribal following, traditionally led by the Haydar family.[133] Thus, whatever support he had from his following was based on tribal and family identifications rather than on any political platform advocating Arab nationalism. While he was close to many Arab nationalists in Damascus, Haydar's Arab nationalism in the 1920s was still in its embryonic elitist form, and was an alien concept to many people, especially to tribal groups in the Beqa and for that matter in South Lebanon.

Regardless of Haydar's leanings, soon after the establishment of Greater Lebanon, he was challenged by rival Shi'a leaders from his own family as well as from other families like the Hamadeh of the Hirmil region. The latter family finally gained the upper hand in Shi'a politics in the Beqa region. This was in part due to French support exercised through co-optation and patronage by the Beirut government. By the late 1920s, most major Shi'a leaders were willing to take part in the political life of French dominated Greater Lebanon.[134]

A similar pattern of communal organisation was present among the

[131] See William L. Cleveland, *Islam Against the West. Shakib Arslan and the Campaign for Islamic Nationalism* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1985).

[132] See Hamadeh, op. cit., pp. 146–148.

[133] On Rustum Haydar's association with the Hashemites, see Hanna Batatu, *The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1982), p. 319 and p. 333.

[134] See Hamadeh, ibid., pp. 262–314.

Shi'a of Jabal 'Amel, where leading families such as al-Ass'ad and 'Usayran were gradually integrated in the political system.[135] On the one hand, communal leaders were integrated in the system as official representatives of their clans in the Beirut government; on the other, the religious establishment joined communal leaders in support of an independent Lebanese entity soon after the Shi'a Ja'afari school of jurisprudence was given official recognition by the state in 1934.

With that arrangement, both the communal and religious Shi'a leadership gained a stake in the system. Prior to that time, separate Shi'a religious status was not recognised. Under the Ottoman Empire and its Sunni Muslim Sultans, the Shi'a were given neither political recognition nor an autonomous religious status. Therefore, Shi'a communal recognition and independent status in the country made them look favourably to Greater Lebanon. Those few Shi'a who identified with Arab nationalism did so on a personal basis, and not as representatives of a community which identified with Arab nationalism. As for Shi'a ulema in Jabal Amel, their initial support for Faisal was mostly motivated by religious reasons and not by their opposition to Christian or French rule in post-1920 Lebanon.

Moreover, it is important to note that even a number of Maronite politicians advocated some form of union with Syria and supported the Hashemite King. But that was no reflection of the mainstream attitude of the community, which favoured the creation of the 1920 Lebanon independent of an Arab kingdom based in Damascus or of any other unitary scheme.[136]

One can deduce that both the Shi'a and Druze communities behaved as two minority groups seeking to preserve their rights as corporate groups. Their concern was not ideological and had little to do with Damascus-based Arab nationalism. As for the leadership, it was concerned with political office and a guaranteed share in Beirut's

[135] This began in the early 1920s. Zamir, op. cit., pp. 185–6.

[136] Following the establishment of Greater Lebanon in 1920, seven members (out of a total of 13) of the Administrative Council called for the total independence of Lebanon without French support, and advocated co-operation with King Faisal in Damascus. While attempting to leave Lebanon to Syria, they were arrested by the French and later deported to the island of Corsica. Most embarrassing to Maronite Patriarch Howayek was that his brother was a member of that pro-Faisal group. On that episode, see Karam, op. cit., pp. 241–2.

political spoils. Instead of being a communal leader in some remote area of the country, after 1920 it could become a 'national' leader in Beirut while retaining traditional communal *Za'amah*.

Shi'a and Druze, however, differed in terms of their communal identifications. While the Druze had already developed a strong communal structure and an identity of their own, the Shi'a had yet to develop a communal identity strong enough to compete on an equal footing with other Lebanese communities. That occurred in the 1970s, nearly fifty years later.

Given these considerations, Shi'a and Druze political representation in Greater Lebanon was more a recognition of their communal autonomous status in a newly formed Lebanese state than a reflection of the demographic size of each community. Although the 1932 census—the last official census taken by the government—put the Shi'a and the Druze in third and fourth rank respectively after the Maronites and the Sunnis, the numerical size of each community carried little political weight in comparison with that of the Sunnis and the Maronites. The 'proportional' sectarian representation of other Lebanese communities was largely a deliberate arrangement agreed upon by the independence leaders. Soon after 1943, sectarian quotas became institutionalised in the political process. Even until the mid-1940s the presidency of the Chamber of Deputies was still being claimed by three communities: the Shi'a, the Greek Catholic, and the Greek Orthodox. In 1946, Greek Orthodox Habib Abou Chahla was elected Speaker, defeating the Shi'a candidate Sabri Hamadeh.[137]

Of significant importance was the external (i.e. Arab and Western) aspect of power-balancing (discussed above) which also placed the Sunnis and the Maronites at an advantage with respect to the other communities. The decisive factor in communal politics in the independence period was the fact that only the Maronite and Sunni leaders had two well-articulated political agendas for the country's future, that is, Lebanese versus pan-Arab.

Consequently, they had issues to discuss, offers to make, ideas to exchange, and differences to reconcile. In other words, they were the

[137] Hamadeh's defeat provoked mass demonstrations in Hamadeh's electoral district in Ba'alback and Hirmil. See Browne, op. cit., vol. IV, Part II, pp. 117–120. See also Salim, op. cit., pp. 188–9.

two principal negotiators and, therefore, the two best equipped partners in any successfully negotiated agreement. That came in 1943. No other two communities could have brokered such an agreement at the time that they did. And no other two communities could have produced two leaders like Khoury and Solh having a congruent political vision of an independent Lebanon—and at the right time.

In Search of a New National Pact

Like other Arab ideological orientations, the National Pact had to be elevated to a national 'ideology', but only after it became a *fait accompli.* It was put to the test in 1958. It passed and, as a result, was given a new lease on life. That it did not forge a national identity was no vindication of its failure since the Pact was not designed to be a vehicle for national cohesion. Rather, it was an official state symbol of national unity based on the explicit recognition of communal heterogeneity. More precisely, the National Pact was the 'national' resultant of clashing local, and regional, communal, ideological, and nationalist currents, which can neither be altered nor contained.

Once the interests of internal and external parties converged in 1958, it was possible to end the crisis in the spirit of the National Pact. By contrast, the political scene in the 1970s was of an unprecedented complication; hence it was not easy to find an acceptable common ground shared by the protagonists. Aside from the unusual radicalisation of Lebanese politics, the number of conflicting issues and their respective advocates made the search for a common denominator very difficult.

Unlike the internal and external balance of forces in 1943 and 1958, when both conflict and accord involved only two parties, in the 1970s, the war pitted a large number of domestic factions and a record number of external parties. Any likely agreement no longer involved a deal between two parties; that is, between pragmatic statesmen, (e.g. Solh and Khoury in 1943), or between a moderate Maronite leader and an undisputed Arab hero (e.g. Chehab and Nasser in 1958). Rather, any agreement—had there been one—had to be brokered between Lebanese leaders, half-a-dozen radical Arab regimes, and at least a similar number of Palestinian factions loyal to antagonistic Arab regimes. That was a no-win situation for Lebanon.

The fact that it was difficult to reach consensus was due to a fundamental flaw in the deal between communal demands and foreign policy priorities. The process of internal 'absorption' and adaptation to the changing ideological content of Arabism is inherently imbalanced since it is based on a *quid pro quo* between a domestic agreement and a compromise on national sovereignty. In 1943, the process involved two communities (the Maronite and the Sunni) and two major issues (Lebanese independence and Arabism), both debated in the context of internal Lebanese politics (political representation) and regional balance-of-power (inter-Arab rivalries.)

On the Maronite side, the process of 'absorption' in the period of the mandate consisted of giving Sunni leaders a greater share in government office. Encouraged by the French, those Sunni leaders willing to co-operate with the Christian political establishment acquired all the privileges accorded to government officials, including a policy of patronage and favouritism aimed at attracting a large following. In return, Sunni leaders advocated a restrained version of Arabism in line with French interests in Lebanon. But from a Sunni standpoint, the process was rather different; it meant encouraging Christian rejection of the French mandate in return for tacit Sunni acceptance of Lebanese national independence.

Although the balancing process worked fairly well in the 1930s and 1940s, it could not be sustained once political assumptions in the equation were no longer tenable. A process of 'absorption' similar to the earlier one was no longer attainable in a polarised internal and external environment, for the swap had been altered. In other words, domestic demands for more equitable political presentation and foreign policy priorities ceased to be tradeable 'commodities' in the 1970s because there was a fundamental dichotomy between internal and external priorities.

While regional diversity gave Lebanon's Muslim elite room to define and reinterpret the Arab dimension of the Pact, this very diversity made Christian decisions all the more difficult. The margin of manoeuvre enjoyed by the Christian leadership which enabled them to resort to 'concessionary' measures to meet Muslim changing identifications with a shifting concept of Arabism has continued to shrink since 1943. Indeed the 'no East, no West' formula ceased to be negotiable

from a Christian viewpoint, once it was stated, for Christians had little leeway to bargain for another deal.

In other words, Christians had little to give up after 1943 in return for Muslim acceptance of Lebanon's sovereignty, as viewed by Christians. Western protection was no longer an option available to the Christians since the Western presence was rejected by the Christian leaders. And having disengaged from the region, Western powers were no longer interested in any deal. For the Christians, the National Pact embodied the maximum range of concessions that they were able and willing to offer in return for Lebanon's independent acceptance in a Muslim-dominated Arab regional order.[138]

The 1943 compromise rested on the static nature of the National Pact, at least with respect to its external dimension. While Lebanon's attitude towards Israel has always been in line with the Arab consensus (until 1975), the Christians could not be forced to abandon their initial position on Lebanon's 'Arab face' by one powerful Arab regime or another.

Even more unacceptable and unconvincing to the Christian leadership was the undefined content of the Arab option they were asked to endorse. Thus if the Christians, particularly the Maronites, are blamed for their lukewarm attitude towards Arabism, their critics are equally blamed for not proving that Arabism is not what many Christians suspect: that is, an instrument of domination at the disposal of Arab rulers who, in most instances, are rejected by their own people.

Conceding that all parties had justified demands and concerns, the Christians' willingness to redress the balance of political representation in favour of the Muslims was not matched by any willingness on the part of the latter to draw the line between Lebanese sovereignty and commitment to an ever changing notion of Arabism.

Under such circumstances, Muslim demands, regardless how rightful, were not entertained by the Christians since it was no longer possible to differentiate between, for example, power-sharing and Palestinian 'rights' to use Lebanon as an open battleground for

[138] See a series of papers entitled, *al-Qadiya al-Lubnaniya*, put out by experts expressing views close to the leadership of the 'Lebanese Front' which grouped prominent Christian leaders and intellectuals like Camille Chamoun, Suleiman Frangiyeh, Pierre Gemayel, Charles Malik, Fouad Bustani, and others.

inter-Arab disputes and to wage war against Israel. In the 1970s, the Christian leadership reached the upper-limit in terms of giving concessions to the other side without getting anything in return, that is, an unambiguous Muslim definition of Lebanon's role in regional politics. Under mounting Palestinian military and political pressures, most Christians, particularly the Maronites, were in no mood to relinquish what they perceived as their last remaining 'guarantees' in a country held hostage to regional conflicts to which there was no end in sight.

Moreover, assuming that the Christians were willing to go along with Muslim and Arab demands, the question then becomes: what would it have taken for the Christians to be accepted as full-fledged partners in Arabism? For example, would a public recognition by Christian leaders that Lebanon is an 'Arab country', or some form of subservience to an Arab regime have been sufficient requirements for the Christians to become accepted as true converts to Arabism? Who would be entitled to give the final stamp of approval of Christian declaration of faith? Which Arab leader or regime: Syrian, Egyptian, Saudi Arabian, Libyan or Palestinian?

And, after being accepted in the Arab fold, would Christians acquire the same rights and privileges as other 'native' Arabs? Above all, would they be able to participate in Arab decision-making, or play a marginal role similar to the one that Lebanon's Muslims have played in Arab politics? Developments in Arab politics have clearly shown that the answer is negative. Indeed, a Lebanon with an 'Arab face' would be as marginal in the Arab state system as a Lebanon immersed in Arabism, whether by force or out of genuine conviction.

The controversy over Lebanon's Arabism is due less to the Christians' failure to live up to the Pact's Arab orientation than to shifting Muslim, and particularly Arab perceptions and priorities. For it is not Lebanon's Christian political establishment that sets the standards and norms of Arabism nor does it define its ideological content. And if Christians had contributions to make to the secular dimension of Arabism in the first half of the twentieth century, they had little to contribute to the Arabism of rival Arab regimes and leaders who fought each other over whose Arabism is better suited to defend the Arab nation and uphold its interests.

Behind these differences lay an identity crisis unsettled by the Lebanese state, as is the case in other Arab countries, the Arab East

where 'national identity' is defined and imposed from above by the authoritarian state.

One way to situate the debate in 1975–76 is to analyse Muslim reactions to the Constitutional Document (*al-Wathiqa al-Dusturiya*) of February 14, 1976. Announced by President Frangiyeh, the Constitutional Document was an attempt to end the war through a programme of reforms of the political system. The Constitutional Document, mediated and supported by Damascus, proclaimed Lebanon's 'Arab identity', made representation in Parliament equal between Christians and Muslims, gave Parliament the power to elect the Prime Minister, abolished 'political confessionalism' except in the upper echelons of state bureaucracy, and confirmed the National Pact's custom of the three presidencies (Maronite President, Sunni Prime Minister, and Shia Speaker).[139]

Although the Constitutional Document addressed essentially Muslim demands and grievances, as expressed in the 1970s, it fell short of satisfying Muslim leaders, notably the Sunni political establishment, the left, and especially Druze leader Kamal Jumblatt. It was the then Syrian Foreign Minister, Abdul-Halim Khaddam who explained to the Muslim leaders that it was in their interest to accept the new agreement, after stressing that Muslim demands of power-sharing and Lebanon's Arabism were met and that 'Maronite hegemony has fallen.'[140] Khaddam's assurances did not satisfy Muslim leaders, especially Salam, Yafi, and Jumblatt who insisted on reducing presidential powers and demanded that it should not be stated in writing (as opposed to a verbal understanding) that the presidency would be reserved to the Maronite Community.[141] The Constitutional Document did not end the war. Quite the contrary, fighting escalated in the spring of 1976 as Palestinian forces, backed by Jumblatt and some Muslims leaders, were heavily engaged in the war against Syrian forces.[142] By then, reformist demands were overshadowed by what Jumblatt termed as an 'Alawite-Maronite agreement' against all other Lebanese parties and the Palestinians.[143]

139 Text in *An-Nahar*, February 15, 1976. See also Deeb, op. cit., pp. 85–88.

140 Khalid, op. cit., pp. 221–7.

141 Ibid.

142 Ibid, pp. 262–285.

143 Ibid, pp. 268–290. On Jumblatt's politics during the war, see Farid al-Khazen, 'The Uncrowned Druze Prince of the Left', *Middle Eastern Studies* (April 1988), pp.

Without dwelling on the politics of the 1975–76 war, one can deduce that the reformed version of the National Pact, as embodied in the Constitutional Document, did not meet Muslim demands and was not sufficient to end a war which, by then, went beyond Lebanon and the Lebanese. In fact, the 1975–76 war was brought to an end only when the Syrian army overran Palestinian forces in various parts of the country.

By then, little was left of the National Pact of 1943. Lebanon's 'Arab face' turned into an open battlefield for Arabs to settle old scores and fight their wars. Lebanon's proclaimed Arabism, as stated in the Constitutional Document, did not solve Lebanon's problems and did not make Arab regimes refrain from fighting over Lebanon's 'Arab identity.' As for political reforms they did not end the war in 1976. One wonders how a reformed 'Arab Lebanon' would have ended the broader and more damaging Palestinian-Syrian war in Lebanon?

These questions are illustrative of the state of chaos and confusion that prevailed in the mid- 1970s. By then, the search for a new post-war National Pact had began and reflected the divergent positions of all parties both—Lebanese and non-Lebanese. That was a long way from the Arabism of the mandate or that of the 1950s and 1960s. Likewise, Syria, the Palestinians (and later Israel and Iran) were different external 'influences' from the French and the British in the 1940s. The open question was and still is: how to bring stability to Lebanon, satisfy all parties to the conflict, attenuate destabilising regional influences, and find a new equilibrium in a revised National Pact?

In Eulogy of the Pact

In the light of the above 'givens' in Lebanon's political culture, the National Pact could be viewed as an arrangement that helped ensure free and peaceful democratic confessional co-existence until the mid-1970s. Needless to say, it was a static arrangement, though not necessarily conducive to immobilism. It was reformable and adaptable,

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178–205. Assad categorically refused to have Jumblatt play any political role after 1986, as suggested by President Sarkis. According to Assad, Jumblatt was 'at the origin of the crisis in Lebanon and the region for having plotted against the security of country and Syria.' For Assad, 'Jumblatt was finished'. See Assad's reply to President Sarkis in Karim Pakradouni, *La paix manquée*, op. cit., p. 65.

particularly in its domestic political content, but only in a gradual way, and, above all, in a favourable regional environment—something over which Lebanon had no control.

While in 1943 and 1958 the National Pact reflected a Maronite-Sunni consensus, in the 1970s it was no longer a covenant (*mithaq*) confined to Lebanese communities. By then, Arab and Palestinian parties had acquired *de facto* partnership in the Pact and a veto power which superseded that of all the Lebanese communities combined. For some Lebanese, it was no longer acceptable to have Lebanon live with an 'Arab face'; it had to acquire an 'Arab heart'. But that 'heart' was an artificial one disputed by antagonistic Arab regimes.

In the end, all communities stood to benefit, though in varying degrees, from the preservation of a reformed National Pact prior to the outbreak of hostilities in 1975. But the development of events were such that it was virtually impossible to draw the line between the internal and external dimensions of the conflict and, by extension, that of the Pact.

Each community was capitalising on the other's demands. As the Shi'a demanded a greater share in the political pie commensurate with their increasing power and communal self-assertion, the Sunnis presented their own list of grievances and demands. Similarly, the Left led by Jumblatt opted for an elusive set of reforms rejected by all other communal leaders, while the Maronites clinged to their 'guarantees' in the system, which were everything but guarantees. And as the country was engulfed in the bloody war, the will to salvage the 1943 formula on the part of all parties was no longer there, for the major worry became daily security and political survival rather than debates regarding other secondary concerns.

Given the problematic nature of the National Pact, is it still possible to argue that it served constructive purposes in Lebanon's political life? To be sure, the Pact helped promote and maintain a tradition alien to most Middle Eastern societies: that of pluralism and tolerance of political, cultural, ideological and religious diversity. After more than three decades, the Pact became more than a change of mood; it became a necessity for co-existence and communal survival for all Lebanese.

Referring to Lebanon's 'interconfessional federation', as reflected in the National Pact, Jacques Berque wrote in 1970 that although the arrangement had its long-term inconveniences it nonetheless brought

coexistence. 'Mieux encore, [la fédération interconfessionelle] permettait l'exercice d'un libéralisme devenu très rare dans le climat afro-asiatique. Elle se prêtait à l'essor culturel et à la liberté d'expression, choses appelées à devenir de plus en plus méritoires dans la région.'[144]

Although the Pact has served its primary purpose, that of 'Lebanising Muslims and Arabising Christians,' it was in the end a communal 'contract'.[145] As Edmond Rabbath pointed out: 'Le contrat n'est jamais éternel. Conclu sans fixation de durée, il est toujours sujet à dénonciation unilatérale. Et c'est contre cette éventualité redoutable, qui peut survenir au gré de la conjoncture arabe ou des circonstances internationales, qu'il convient de se prémunir.'[146] Indeed, the contract was revoked in 1975 by all parties and no viable agreement enjoying the support of most Lebanese has been reached ever since.

Despite today's general dissatisfaction with the National Pact, there has always been a yearning for the good old days of the Pact. This feeling is shared by many Lebanese, particularly those who came to appreciate the virtues of political liberty and reap the fruits of economic prosperity in contrast with the conditions prevailing in some neighbouring countries. Nonetheless, few are willing to revive it in its original double negation form.

Notwithstanding the divergent assessments of the Pact's contributions to confessional harmony, in times of crisis the Pact regains pre-1943 communal interpretations which mirror sectarian discord rather than unity. In such times, Albert Hourani writes, 'all [the sects] might speak of a Lebanese nation, and of equality between the sects, but they meant different things. For some, Lebanon was still essentially a Maronite national home; for some, a Christian refuge; for some, a secular state based on a scarcely existing national home; for some, a temporary expedient until a broad, secular Arab state should be ready to absorb it. These concepts expressed themselves in different nationalist movements and parties—Lebanese, 'Syrian' and Arab—but behind them lay different religious loyalties, still the fundamental reality in Lebanese society.'[147]

144 Jacques Berque, 'Préface', in Jacques Couland, *Le mouvement syndical au Liban, 1919–1946* (Paris: Editions Sociales, 1970), p. 8.

145 Rabbath, op. cit., p. 518.

146 Ibid., p. 557.

147 Hourani, *The Emergence of the Modern Middle East*, op. cit., pp. 140–141.

In retrospect, the National Pact could be seen as a face-saving arrangement for the communal 'malentendus' that have shaped Lebanon's historical development. It was also a Levantine deal *par excellence*: a marriage of convenience between Arab, Mediterranean, and Western orientations made possible by the brief interlude of the 1940s. Indeed, the Pact was Lebanon's only officially recognised 'civil marriage', later revoked by both religious and civilian authorities. It brought together a pragmatic elite, but was too tenuous to weather the erratic mood of the masses. The Pact would have fared better in a more stable regional environment where it would not be necessary to elevate it to a national state doctrine which had to compete with changing pan-Arab ideologies promoted by authoritarian states.

Despite its shortcomings and 'reactionary' confessional character, the National Pact, based on the very concept of dissent, was liberal in substance and was the last remnant of the liberal age in Arab politics that came to an end at the hands of military dictators and self-styled revolutionaries. Nonetheless, with Lebanon's disintegration and the emergence of a variety of post-war Pacts, ranging from federation formulas to 'Islamic solutions,' the 1943 National Pact was, and still is, an indispensible preliminary working paper without which the reshaping of Lebanon's future is impossible.